

On Top Of The News Email: news@arubatoday.com website: www.arubatoday.com Tel: +297 582-7800 Saturday, March 1, 2014



President Barack Obama speaks about Ukraine in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House in Washington, Friday, Feb. 28, 2014. Obama's statement comes as his administration is expressing growing concern over Russian intentions in Ukraine. Secretary of State John Kerry delivered a blunt warning Friday to Moscow against military moves in the country's southern Crimea region that could further inflame tensions. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak)

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Ousted Ukraine leader: 'Nobody Deposed Me'

STEVEN LEE MYERS

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ROSTOV-ON-DON, Russia - Viktor Yanukovich, the ousted president of Ukraine, appealed for calm on Friday and rejected separatism or forcible intervention from abroad, even by Russia, where he has taken refuge.

Appearing in public for the first time since he fled

a separatist referendum and the groups of armed men who have seized government buildings and airports and raised Russian flags in recent days.

He said he would not ask his Russian hosts to send troops, either to help him or the separatists.

"I think any military action is unacceptable," he said. "I have no intention to ask

ment building, but rather in the Vertol Expo center, a new shopping mall, hotel and exhibition center fairly distant from the city center. An exhibition of tractors and other farm equipment was in progress inside and outside the center.

Police officers were posted outside the entrance to the wing where Yanukovich was speaking, allowing

fore Friday. He had been heard from only in a video from his political stronghold in eastern Ukraine and in a statement, in which he declared that he remained the lawfully elected leader of Ukraine.

Reporters asked Yanukovich about the lavishly appointed presidential mansion and estate in Mezhygorye, outside of Kiev,

Anti-government protests continue across Venezuela

FABIOLA SANCHEZ

Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Scattered barricades blocked streets in some Caracas neighborhoods Friday even while life went on as usual in others as a political standoff persisted through the second day of national holidays.

In spite of the long weekend heading into three days of Carnival, student-led demonstrations have so far maintained a street presence, not just in the capital, but also in cities including Valencia, Merida and San Cristobal.

In that context President Nicolas Maduro forged ahead with a new round of televised peace meetings Friday. He announced his intention to establish similar conferences in all states. Absent were members of the opposition, who refuse to open a dialogue until Maduro releases protesters from jail and stops harsh crackdowns on protests.

"I believe the country would win if we see each other face to face and talk," Maduro said.

But that appears unlikely to happen with one opposition leader in jail and an arrest order out for another.

About two weeks of student-led protests mostly in middle-class neighborhoods have left 17 dead. Venezuelans face inflation that hit 56 percent last year, scarcity of basic necessities and runaway violent crime.

At a human rights demonstration in a well-off part of east Caracas, several hundred protesters waved Venezuelan flags and held signs with the photos of those killed during demonstrations. "There's not going to be peace until there's justice," said 32-year-old hairdresser Amanda Valero.

But in the massive slum of Petare life marched on normally with hundreds of street vendors pushing their wares at its central circle.

"The people of Petare are warriors, the people of Petare don't stop for anything," □



Ukraine's fugitive president Viktor Yanukovich gives a news conference in Rostov-on-Don, a city in southern Russia about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) from Moscow, Friday, Feb. 28, 2014. Ukrainian fugitive president appears for first time since Saturday at Russia news conference.

(AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin)

Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, a week ago, Yanukovich insisted to a roomful of reporters here that he was still the legitimate president of Ukraine and that lawmakers in Kiev had not taken the steps required by the constitution to remove him from power.

"Nobody deposed me," he said in a statement, speaking in Russian. "I had to leave Ukraine because there was a direct and imminent threat to my life." He said Ukraine had been taken over by nationalist thugs, with the assistance of the West, and called for a restoration of the government he once led.

Yanukovich said that Crimea, the predominantly ethnic Russian region in the south, should remain part of Ukraine, despite the demonstrations there calling for independence, the talk of

for military support. I think Ukraine should remain one indivisible country."

Yanukovich, who had Kremlin backing while in power, said he was surprised, "knowing the character of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin," that the Russian president had said so little about the events of the last week in Ukraine.

"I believe that Russia must and is obliged to act," Yanukovich said. Pressed by reporters to elaborate, he said, "It would be inappropriate for me at this point to say what Russia should do."

He said he had spoken to Putin by telephone but had not met with him since his arrival in Russia.

It seemed telling that Yanukovich's news conference here, in the major Russian city nearest to Crimea, was not being held in a govern-

only journalists to enter, after passing through metal detectors at the door. Among the officers inside were several plainclothes agents who appeared to be part of Russia's diplomatic security service, the kind of protection typically provided to visiting foreign officials.

The conference hall was packed with dozens of journalists and television crews. Four Ukrainian flags stood behind a large wooden desk.

Asked if the Russian authorities had helped him leave Ukraine, Yanukovich declined to say exactly how he had arrived.

"I got into Russia thanks to patriotic officers," he said. "That's what I would say. They did what they had to do."

His whereabouts had been shrouded with mystery be-

which was taken over by protesters and opened to the public after he fled the capital. He smirked and said, "That's the most important question, right?"

He then said that not all of the estate was his property, only the house, which he said he bought from the government for \$3.2 million. He did not discuss the zoo, greenhouses or golf course on the property or the wooden ship that served as a private restaurant, except to say that there were other owners of parts of the estate whose lawyers would soon be in touch with officials in Kiev to reclaim their properties. He did not name the other owners.

Yanukovich's remarks, which were televised live, did not seem to make much of an impression in Crimea. □

Obama warns Russia of 'costs' in Ukraine



Secretary of State John Kerry listens to translation during a joint news conference with Colombian Foreign Minister Maria Holguin at the State Department in Washington, Friday, Feb. 28, 2014, as Kerry opened a fourth round of the U.S.-Colombia High-Level Partnership Dialogue. Kerry said he had called Russia's foreign minister to express U.S. concerns over military activity in Crimea that could further inflame tensions in Ukraine following the ouster of its Russian-backed president. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster)

AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama expressed deep concern Friday over reported military activity inside Ukraine by Russia and bluntly warned "there will be costs" for any intervention.

He did not say what those costs might be.

Obama called on Russia to respect the independence and territory of Ukraine and not try to take advantage of its neighbor, which is undergoing political upheaval. "Any violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity would be deeply destabilizing," Obama said in a statement delivered from the White House. Such action by Russia would not serve the interests of the Ukrainian people, Russia or Europe, Obama said, and would represent a "profound interference" in matters he said must be decided by the Ukrainian people.

"Just days after the world came to Russia for the Olympic Games, that would invite the condemnation of nations around the world," Obama said. "The United States will stand with the international community in affirming that there will be costs for any military intervention in Ukraine."

As Obama prepared to

speak, a spokesman for the Ukrainian border service said eight Russian transport planes had landed with unknown cargo in Crimea, a pro-Russian region of southern Ukraine. Serhiy Astakhov told The Associated Press that the Il-76 planes arrived unexpectedly Friday and were given permission to land, one after the other, at Gvardeiskoye air base, north of the regional capital, Simferopol. Astakhov said the people in the planes refused to identify themselves and waved off customs officials.

Obama noted that Russia has a historic relationship with Ukraine, a former Soviet republic, including cultural and economic ties and a Russian military facility in Crimea.

In recent conversations between U.S. and Russian officials, including a lengthy telephone conversation between Obama and Russian President Vladimir Putin just last week, Obama said the U.S. has made clear to the Russians that they can be part of an international community's effort to support the stability and success of Ukraine.

But, he said Friday, "we are now deeply concerned by reports of military movements taken by the Russian Federation inside of Ukraine."

Earlier Friday, as pro-Russia gunmen patrolled Crimean streets in armored vehicles and took over airports there, Secretary of State John Kerry warned Moscow against military moves in Crimea that could further inflame tensions.

Kerry and White House spokesman Jay Carney both said any Russian military intervention would be a grave mistake and that the United States was watching closely. They did not spell out any consequences for an intervention. Kerry said he called Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov for the second time in two days to press the Kremlin to keep its promise to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Lavrov repeated Russian

President Vladimir Putin's pledge to do just that while also pointing out that Russia has broad interests in Ukraine, Kerry said.

The secretary of state said the U.S. was watching to see if Russian activity in Crimea "might be crossing a line in any way." He added that the administration would be "very careful" in making judgments about that. Carney echoed Kerry's comments at the White House.

Kerry reiterated the U.S. view that Russian military intervention in Ukraine following the ouster of the country's Russia-backed leader would run counter to Russia's self-professed opposition to such operations in other countries, such as Libya and Syria. □

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Winter storm brings rain and new troubles to a dry California

IAN LOVETT

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LOS ANGELES - Residents woke up Friday morning to a foreign pitter-patter on the sidewalks outside. It was raining.

A second winter storm this week swept into California on Friday, bringing more rain than this drought-hit state has had in months.

Even for sun-worshipping Californians, the rain was a welcome change, coming after the driest year in the state's history, which left some communities at risk of running out of drinking water.

Yet for all of the celebration and relief, the storm also brought a new set of problems. Because the ground is so dry, it is less able to absorb water, and flash-flood warnings were

issued in Los Angeles and several other counties. Several roads around Los Angeles County were closed Friday morning because of flooding and rock slides.

Less than 1.5 inches of rain had fallen in the region since July, according to the National Weather Service. More than that has already fallen this week. And the current storm system could deliver 10 inches over the next several days, which could help refill reservoirs that are as much as 70 feet below maximum levels in some cases.

Other parts of the state, including the Central Valley and San Francisco Bay, also reported rain, and heavy snow was forecast for the Sierra Nevadas. The San Francisco airport was reporting significant delays



Glendora city workers clear mud and debris from the hills, in Glendora, Calif. on Friday, Feb. 28, 2014. The first wave of a powerful Pacific storm spread rain and snow early Friday through much of California, where communities endangered by a wildfire just weeks ago now faced the threat of mud and debris flows.

(AP Photo/Nick Ut)

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because of the wind and rain. But officials warned that much more moisture was needed. "This won't take us out of the drought, but it definitely helps," said Kathy Hoxsie of the National Weather Service. "It tends to be a short-lived solution unless we can get some more rain."

Some flooding was reported in the Los Angeles and San Francisco areas. Evacuations were ordered for more than 1,000 homes in Glendora and Azusa, east of Los Angeles, where a wildfire scorched the hillside in January, leaving the communities vulnerable to mudslides because the vegetation that helps hold the earth in place had been burned.

Power was out in the area, and before leaving, residents on the hillside packed sandbags in front of their doors, hoping to keep out any water and debris that might flow downhill.

At a Glendora coffee shop, where some had gathered to wait until power was restored, Tina Donhoff, who lives a block south of the evacuation area, said most of her neighbors had remained in their homes, thinking the sandbagging and other preparations would prevent any problems.

"Everyone I know has chosen not to evacuate," Donhoff, 48, said.

At a morning news conference, city and county officials urged people to leave, even though the damage so far had been limited to a couple of mud flows. Chief Tim Staab of the Glendora Police Department assured residents that their properties were being protected from looting. As the National Weather Service issued flooding warnings, with estimates of downpours of an inch per hour, Staab said that right now would be a good time to leave.

"Once that mud starts flowing, it can be too late to get out," Staab said. "There's nothing you can do once that mud starts flowing."

Despite "a little bit of earth movement," in the area of the wildfire Friday morning, there were no reports of damage or injuries yet, said Sgt. John Madaloni of the Azusa Police Department. In Los Angeles, commuters accustomed to gridlock found traffic even more snarled than usual.

"Los Angeles. It's rain," Dane Cook, a comedian, wrote on Twitter on Friday. "If it becomes fire or frogs or chunks of asteroids that's when you can drive like maniacs. For now, relax." □

Released documents show Clinton health care strategy

KEN THOMAS

PHILIP ELLIOTT

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former President Bill Clinton's aides were concerned early in his presidency about the failed health care overhaul effort, led by his wife, and a need to "soften" the image of Hillary Rodham Clinton, according to documents released Friday. Mrs. Clinton now is a potential 2016 presidential contender.

The National Archives released about 4,000 pages of previously confidential

not said whether she will run.

Friday's documents release included memos related to the former president's ill-fated health care reform proposal in 1993 and 1994, a plan that failed to win support in a Congress controlled by Democrats and turned into a rallying cry for Republicans who swept to power in both the Senate and House of Representatives in the 1994 midterm elections.

As first lady, Hillary Clinton chaired her husband's health care task force,

quick action, warning that enthusiasm for health reform "will fade over time." But the documents also showed the growing concerns among Clinton's fellow Democrats in Congress. Lawmakers, it said, "going to their home districts for the August break are petrified about having difficult health care reform issues/questions thrown at them." Obama and his fellow Democrats finally passed a major health care overhaul in early 2010, with support from the Clintons. Unlike the Clinton-era effort, the

piece of her "American Health Choices Plan," requiring health coverage while offering federal subsidies to help reduce the cost to purchasers. Obamacare also provides federal subsidies.

By September 1993, Mrs. Clinton acknowledged the obstacles in a meeting with

House and Senate Democratic leaders and committee chairs. "I think that, unfortunately, in the glare of the public political process, we may not have as much time as we need for that kind of thoughtful reflection and research," the first lady said, citing "this period of challenge." □



Democratic Senate challenger Alison Lundergan Grimes left, speaks with former President Bill Clinton as they are introduced at a fundraiser at the Galt House Hotel, Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2014, in Louisville, Ky.

(AP Photo/Timothy D. Easley)

documents involving the Clinton administration, providing a glimpse into the struggles of his health care task force, led by the first lady, and other priorities such as the U.S. economy and the North American Free Trade Agreement. Hillary Clinton's potential White House campaign has increased interest in Clinton Presidential Library documents from her husband's administration during the 1990s and her own decades in public service. A former New York senator and secretary of state, Mrs. Clinton is the leading Democratic contender to succeed President Barack Obama, though she has

largely meeting in secret to develop a plan to provide universal health insurance coverage.

White House aides expressed initial optimism about her ability to help craft and enact a major overhaul of U.S. health care.

"The first lady's months of meetings with the Congress has produced a significant amount of trust and confidence by the members in her ability to help produce a viable health reform legislative product with the president," said an undated and unsigned document, which was cataloged with others from April 1993. The document urged

reform signed into law by Obama, known as Obamacare, carried a mandate that all Americans must obtain health insurance or pay a fine.

The new documents showed that Mrs. Clinton was doubtful that a health care law with a universal mandate — requiring people to carry health insurance — would be approved. "That is politically and substantively a much harder sell than the one we've got — a much harder sell," she told congressional Democrats in September 1993.

In 2007, when she ran for president, Clinton made the mandate a center-

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NYC official: Hoffman died of toxic mix of drugs

NEW YORK (AP) — A toxic mix of heroin and other drugs killed Oscar-winning actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, New York City officials said Friday.

Hoffman died from a mix of heroin, cocaine, amphetamines and benzodiazepines, which are psychoactive drugs, said a spokeswoman for the New York City medical examiner. The death was ruled an accident. Law enforcement officials have said Hoffman was found Feb. 2 with a needle in his arm, and tests found heroin in samples from at least 50 packets in his Manhattan apartment.

Police had been investigating his death as a suspected drug overdose. An autopsy in February was inconclusive and medical examiners said more tests were needed.

Authorities also found unused syringes, a charred spoon and various prescription medications, including a drug used to treat heroin addiction, a blood-pressure medication and a muscle relaxant. Hoffman, 46, who won an



In this 2014 photo, Philip Seymour Hoffman poses for a portrait during the Sundance Film Festival, in Park City, Utah. A spokeswoman for the New York City medical examiner said Friday, Feb. 28, that Hoffman died from a mix of heroin, cocaine, amphetamines and benzodiazepines, which are psychoactive drugs. The death was ruled an accident.

(Photo by Victoria Will/Invision/AP)

Oscar for "Capote" and starred in numerous other movies as well as New York stage productions, had been frank about struggling with substance

abuse. He told CBS' "60 Minutes" in 2006 that had he used "anything I could get my hands on" before getting clean at age 22. But in interviews last year,

he said he'd relapsed, had developed a heroin problem and had gone to rehab for a time.

Investigators have been probing how Hoffman may have obtained the heroin. Tests of the heroin in his apartment have found that it was not cut with a dangerous additive such as fentanyl, a synthetic form of morphine used to intensify the high that has been linked to deaths in other states. A musician, veteran jazz player Robert Vineberg, has been charged with keeping a heroin stash in a lower Manhattan apartment amid the investigation into Hoffman's death. Vineberg, who has said he was a friend of the Tony Award-nominated Hoffman, hasn't been charged in Hoffman's death and has said he didn't sell him the heroin found in his apartment. As police followed a tip after Hoffman's death, they said they found about 300 small bags of heroin, worth about \$10 apiece on the street, and \$1,300 in cash in Vineberg's apartment and music studio. □

Man convicted of killing women from website

ED WHITE

Associated Press

MOUNT CLEMENS, Michigan (AP) — Loud cheers and sobs broke the calm of the courtroom Friday as a Detroit-area man was convicted of killing four women in his basement and stuffing their bodies in car trunks after he met them through online escort ads.

Police said James Brown killed the women in pairs, just days apart, at his Sterling Heights home in December 2011 while his mother was upstairs. The bodies were left miles (kilometers) away in a Detroit neighborhood. Two were burned beyond recognition when a car was set on fire. Brown, 25, was convicted of first-degree murder, arson and disinterment of a body after a three-week trial in Macomb County court. He faces life in prison with no chance for parole when he returns on April 15. "I wish they had the electrocution chair. I want a life for a life. He needs to die," said Chikita Madison, the mother of one victim and the aunt of another.

Denise Higgins, the mother of another victim, said: "Why God has put us through this, I don't understand."

The jury deliberated less than four hours over two days after Thursday's closing arguments. Judge James Biernat Jr. told spectators to keep a lid on their emotions, but the warning didn't stop some family members and friends from loudly expressing delight as the verdict was read.

"Yes!" one man yelled after the first of 10 guilty verdicts was announced by the jury foreman.

The women who were killed were Renisha Landers, Demesha Hunt, Natasha Curtis and Vernithea McCrary, all in their 20s. They met Brown through Backpage.com, which carries personal ads for people looking for sex.

"I told her this was not a suitable way of meeting a guy," Higgins said, referring to McCrary. "There are sick people out there." □

Kerry Kennedy acquitted of drugged driving

JIM FITZGERALD

Associated Press

WHITE PLAINS, New York (AP) — Kerry Kennedy

was acquitted Friday of drugged driving after she accidentally took a sleeping pill and then sideswiped a truck in a wild highway drive she said she didn't remember.

Kennedy hugged and clasped hands with her lawyers as a six-person jury cleared her of driving while impaired, a misdemeanor. It had carried the potential for up to a year in jail, though that would be unlikely for a first-time offender.

"I'm incredibly grateful to the jury for working so hard on this case ... and to my lawyers ... and to my family and friends and so many other people who supported me," Kennedy said afterward. "I'm happy justice was done."



Kerry Kennedy, center, leaves Westchester County courthouse with Rory Kennedy, left, in White Plains, N.Y. Kennedy was acquitted Friday, Feb. 28, 2014, of drugged driving after she accidentally took a sleeping pill and then sideswiped a truck in a wild highway drive she said she didn't remember.

(AP Photo/Frank Franklin II)

A human-rights advocate, Kennedy is a scion of one political dynasty — a daughter of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and niece of

President John F. Kennedy — and a onetime member of another, as the former wife of New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo. Her 85-year-

old mother, Ethel Kennedy, and other members of their famous family attended the trial, which drew so much attention that it was moved from a small-town courtroom to a bigger courthouse in White Plains. Prosecutors and Kennedy's defense lawyers agreed the 54-year-old took the sleeping drug zolpidem unintentionally, mistaking it for her daily thyroid medication, before heading off to her suburban New York gym on July 13, 2012. The trial centered on whether or not she realized she was impaired and should have stopped.

Despite the pill mix-up, "she is responsible for the chain of events that happened after that," prosecutor Doreen Lloyd said in her summation. She argued that Kennedy shrugged off the symptoms because she was busy. □

US Financial Front:

America's estimated Q4 economic growth rate cut to 2.4%

MARTIN CRUTSINGER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy grew at a 2.4 percent annual rate last quarter, sharply less than first thought, in part because consumers didn't spend as much as initially estimated.

Severe winter weather is expected to further slow the economy in the current quarter.

But as temperatures warm, most economists think growth will rebound beginning in the spring.

The Commerce Department on Friday reduced its estimate of economic growth in the October-December quarter from an initial 3.2 percent annual rate. A key reason for the downgrade was that consumer spending is now estimated to have expanded at a 2.6 percent annual rate, below the initial estimate of 3.3 percent though still the strongest quarterly spending by consumers in nearly

two years.

Economists said the more sluggish pace of consumer spending resulted from bad weather at the end of the year, which cut into vehicle sales, among other purchases.

But they pointed to one key point of encouragement in the report: The government's estimate of business investment was revised up to an annual rate of 7.3 percent — the best quarterly showing in a year and sharply higher than the initial 3.8 percent annual rate.

Jennifer Lee, senior economist at BMO Capital Markets, said that while she expects bad weather to limit this quarter's growth to a tepid annual rate of around 1.7 percent, she's looking for a solid rebound for the rest of the year.

"Due to Mother Nature, quarter one is not going to be anything worth writing home about," Lee wrote in

a research note.

"The rebound ... and all of that pent-up demand won't show up until the second quarter."

In a separate report, the

while bad weather kept consumers away from retail outlets, it had not shaken confidence.

"Consumers have displayed remarkable resili-

ployment gains," said University of Michigan economist Richard Curtin.

Economists said steady consumer confidence supported their expectations



Container ships wait to be off-loaded in a thick fog at the Port of Oakland in Oakland, Calif. The Commerce Department released fourth-quarter gross domestic product data on Friday, Feb. 28, 2014.

(AP Photo/Ben Margot)

University of Michigan's monthly index of consumer sentiment showed that

ience in the face of the polar vortex as well as higher utility bills and minimal em-

for a rebound in spending once the weather improves. □

United States consumer confidence ticks up in February

C. S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A surprisingly optimistic outlook among younger Americans and a higher stock market pushed up a measure of U.S. consumer sentiment in February.

The increase was small, but the harsh winter weather appears to have had little effect on Americans' confidence so far. That's a sign that spending might pick up in the coming months.

The University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index ticked up to 81.6 in February from 81.2 in January. It's still slightly below December's figure.

"While the weather made trips to the store more difficult, the data suggest that purchases were postponed rather than canceled," the report said. For example, consumers' home-buying plans were largely unchanged.

The survey also found that Americans under age 35 have grown more opti-

mistic that their pay will increase. On average, they expect income gains of 5 percent over the next 12 months, the survey found. That's the largest expected gain since November 2006. Richard Curtin, director of the survey, said that is a welcome change for an age group that has been particularly hard hit by the recession and sluggish recovery.

Unemployment rates for younger Americans have been much higher than for older workers since the recession ended almost five years ago. And their income gains have been weak. Anecdotes of college graduates living with their parents and working low-wage jobs are widespread.

The Michigan survey's finding provides some hope that such trends might be turning around. In a healthy economy, younger Americans usually anticipate solid income growth as they gain experience and

become more productive, Curtin said. Optimism about future income may suggest that more people under 35 are finding jobs and that some who are working are getting promotions, he added.

Still, other surveys haven't found rising optimism

among younger people. In an Associated Press-GfK poll in January, just 38 percent of those under 35 said they expected their financial situation to improve in the coming year, down from around half who said so through most of 2011 and 2012.

Among Americans as a whole, the expectation is that their paychecks will rise just 0.9 percent in the coming year. While that matches a six-month high reached in January, it's still below the inflation rate and is low by historical standards. □

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No sign of expansion at plant where UAW dealt loss

ERIK SCHELZIG
 Associated Press
 NASHVILLE, Tennessee (AP) — Friday marks the end of the two-week period within

representation by the United Auto Workers union. So far there's little sign of any pending announcement.

by threats and intimidation from Republicans like U.S. Sen Bob Corker, Gov. Bill Haslam and state lawmakers.

Corker's statements that a vote against the union would be followed in short order by an expansion announcement.

"Unfortunately, I have to assume that today's action may slow down Volkswagen's final discussions on the new SUV line," he said at the time.

Volkswagen has remained silent on Corker's latest assertions as well as the UAW appeal.

The company did not immediately respond to messages seeking a comment Thursday.

The NLRB has given the UAW an extension until March 7 to present its evidence to support the case.

Corker, a former Chattanooga mayor who played a large role in courting Volkswagen to build the plant in Chattanooga, calls the UAW complaint an effort to "try to muzzle or keep a United States Senator, a governor or a state legislator from being able to express their views."

Corker and fellow Republicans said they worried that a UAW foothold with its first foreign automaker in the South would have hurt the region's ability to attract suppliers and other manufacturing plants.

But the anti-union campaign left a sour taste among labor officials at Volkswagen, which is embarking on a \$7 billion investment spree in North America over the next five years.



Retired circuit judge Sam Payne, left, announces that Volkswagen employees voted to deny representation by the United Auto Workers union in Chattanooga, Tenn.

(AP Photo/Dan Henry)

which a U.S. senator promised Volkswagen would announce another line at its factory in Tennessee if workers there rejected rep-

Workers at the Chattanooga plant ended up voting 712-626 against the UAW, in an election the union claims was tainted

The UAW last week filed a challenge with the National Labor Relations Board, seeking to have results voided and a new election to be held.

The appeal cited warnings from Republican lawmakers that a pro-union vote would endanger key state incentives to secure the new line at the plant, and

"If the UAW is voted down they're going to come here immediately, within a two-week period, and affirm they're going to build a line here," Corker told The Associated Press the day before the conclusion of the three-day vote.

The Senator also dismissed the repeated claim by Volkswagen that a decision about whether to build a new SUV either in Chattanooga or at a plant in Mexico was unrelated to the union vote.

"There is no way I'd put out statement like I put out unless I was 1,000 percent that it was accurate in every way," Corker said at the time.

"This resonates as a classic 'fist inside the velvet glove' threat," the UAW appeal said. "If you vote against the union you will be rewarded, but if you go the other way you will be punished."

"Senator Corker knew exactly what he was doing," according to the filing. Corker blamed the UAW appeal — and the resulting delay in certifying the results of the union election — for putting a hold on expansion talks at the plant.

SeaWorld files complaint against investigator

KYLE HIGHTOWER
 Associated Press
 MIAMI (AP) — SeaWorld has filed a complaint alleging that a federal investigator who probed a SeaWorld trainer's death engaged in unethical conduct by fraternizing with makers of a documentary critical of the park.

The six-page complaint, sent to the Labor Department on Thursday, states that SeaWorld believes that Occupational Safety and Health Administration investigator Lara Padgett "violated the Standards of Ethical Conduct for government employees...as well as other requirements of federal law."

Padgett investigated the

death of trainer Dawn Brancheau in 2010. Brancheau was pulled into a pool by 12,000-pound (5,400-kilogram) killer whale named Tilikum and drowned.

"We believe that this conduct demonstrates that she was influenced by improper considerations, and failed to bring the appropriate objectivity, in the investigation of the death of whale trainer Dawn Brancheau at SeaWorld of Florida," the complaint says. "We believe that this continues to influence her ongoing enforcement efforts with regard to SeaWorld." The complaint also includes what it says are examples of Padgett's violations of

federal statute, such as posting critical comments about SeaWorld on social media and pictures of her attending film festivals with makers of the 2013 "Blackfish" documentary.

"Evidence compiled over the past year, and presented to the federal Office of Inspector General, suggests that the OSHA compliance officer who led the inspection of SeaWorld Orlando following the death of killer whale trainer Dawn Brancheau, may have acted with a different agenda, one that is sympathetic to animal rights activism," SeaWorld spokesman Fred Jacobs wrote in an email statement to The Associated Press.



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Chinese media outlet uses racial slur at US envoy

DIDI TANG

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — A major Chinese government news service used a racist slur to describe the departing American ambassador in a mean-spirited editorial on Friday that drew widespread public condemnation in China.

The article — which called Gary Locke a “rotten banana,” a guide dog for the blind, and a plague — reflected Chinese nationalists’ acute loathing toward the first Chinese-American to have been Washington’s top envoy to Beijing. Locke’s ethnic background particularly interested the Chinese government and people. Locke won public applause when he was seen carrying his own bag and flying economy class but he drew criticism from Beijing as his demeanor was an unwelcome contrast to Chinese officials’ privileges and entitlements.

In Washington, top diplomat John Kerry paid tribute to Locke as “a champion of human dignity and a relentless advocate for America’s values.” Asked about the China News Service commentary, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters Friday: “We are not going to dignify the name-calling in that editorial with a response.”

In his 2½ years in Beijing, Locke oversaw the defusing of two delicate diplomatic episodes when a powerful police chief fled to a U.S. consulate and later when a persecuted blind activist sought shelter in the embassy. The Chinese public also credit him with making them realize the harm of the tiny pollut-

ant PM2.5 and severity of China’s foul air by posting the embassy’s hourly readings of air quality.

Meanwhile, the editorials in Chinese state media turned from initial reserva-

tion to unfriendliness to the insolence of the final piece. “I think it shows the unfriendliness and impoliteness by the Chinese government toward Gary Locke, and it is without the

manners and dignity of a major power,” legal scholar Hao Jinsong said. “It is unfitting of China’s status as a diplomatic power. As a Chinese, I am very angry and feel ashamed of it.”

The editorial “Farewell, Gary Locke” took direct aim at Locke’s identity as a third-generation Chinese-American, calling him a “banana” — a racial term for Asians identifying with Western values despite their skin color. “But when a banana sits out for long, its yellow peels will always rot, not only revealing its white core but also turning into the stomach-churning color of black,” read the editorial. The author Wang Ping — likely a pseudonym — slammed Locke’s portrayal as an official judicious with public funds but criticized him for being hypocritical as he retreated into his multimillion-dollar official residence and special-made, bullet-proof luxury vehicle.

Wang belittled Locke’s inability to speak his ancestral language and accused him of failing to understand China’s law but fanning “evil winds” in the ethnically sensitive regions of Tibet and Xinjiang. □



Gary Locke, the outgoing U.S. ambassador to China, leaves after a farewell news conference held at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. A major Chinese government news service used a racist slur to describe Locke in a mean-spirited editorial on Friday that drew widespread public condemnation in China.

(AP Photo/Ng Han Guan, Pool)

Jihadi fighters withdraw from parts of north Syria

BASSEM MROUE

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Members of an al-Qaida-breakaway group withdrew Friday from parts of the northern province of Aleppo, ahead of a Saturday deadline issued by another rebel group that could spark more infighting, opposition activists said. Fighters from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant evacuated from several towns north of Aleppo, including Azaz near the Turkish border, Aleppo-based activists who go by the names of Ibrahim Saeed and Abu Raed said. Rival fighters moved in shortly after, the

activists and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The pullout came three days after the leader of a powerful al-Qaida-linked group in Syria gave the Islamic State a five-day ultimatum to accept mediation by leading clerics to end infighting or be “expelled” from the region.

The ultimatum, announced in an audio recording by the leader of the Nusra Front, aims to end two months of deadly violence between the Islamic State and other Islamic factions that activists say has killed more than 3,000 people. The infighting is undermin-

ing the opposition fighters’ wider struggle against President Bashar Assad’s government. There has been no official reaction from the Islamic State so far but they most likely will reject the ultimatum, possibly leading to more deadly battles in the coming days.

Saeed said Islamic State fighters appear to be withdrawing toward their stronghold in the northeastern city of Raqqa, the first provincial capital in Syria to fall to the rebels. The Islamic State’s shadowy leader, known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, once called it the group’s capital.

Saeed added that Islamic

State fighters torched a power station in the town of Tal Rifaat and dismantled Al-Faisal Mills, one of the largest flour mills in Aleppo province, before they left.

“I expect battles in the near future,” Saeed said. He said rebels who entered the abandoned territory questioned former Islamic State members who defected for fears of them being in “sleeping cells.”

“Northern parts of Aleppo are free of the Islamic State” said Abu Raed, who added that they blew up some helicopters in the army air base of Mannagh that rebels captured last year. □

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2 women killed at law offices in Germany

BERLIN (AP) — Two women were killed in separate attacks at lawyers' offices in western Germany on Friday, and police later arrested a suspect who they said had dealings with both offices. The suspect first stabbed a woman at a lawyers' office in Duesseldorf, also injuring a man during an attack in which he may also have used a firearm and then set a fire, prosecutor Christoph Kumpa told reporters. It wasn't immediately clear who the victim was, but police said the suspected assailant had had a dispute with a lawyer at the office.

About 90 minutes later, a second woman — a lawyer's assistant — was killed at an office in Erkrath, some 15 kilometers (9 miles) away, and a man was injured.

The man's legal case had been referred to the Erkrath office.

Police launched a massive manhunt and arrested the man Friday afternoon in Goch, near the Dutch border, after he forced his way into a pizza restaurant — setting off a scuffle in which two people were



Police officers with guns leave a building in Erkrath, western Germany Friday, Feb. 28, 2014. Police in Germany have launched a manhunt after two people were killed in separate attacks at lawyers' offices in the west of the country. Duesseldorf police say one woman died after being shot at a lawyer's office in the city around noon Friday. Shortly after the first killing, a second woman was shot dead in the town of Erkrath, about 15 kilometers (9 miles) away. A man was seriously injured in that attack.

(AP Photo/dpa, Jan-Philipp Strobel)

lightly injured. Kumpa said the suspect apparently had a score to settle with the restaurant's owner.

Officials identified the suspect only as Yanquing T., in keeping with German privacy rules. They said the

48-year-old, who was born in Shanghai and lived in Duesseldorf, admitted the attacks. □

EU court says Nazi suspect unfit for trial

DAVID RISING
Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — A 94-year-old man deported from the U.S. for lying about his Nazi past is unfit for trial on allegations that he was an accessory to thousands of murders as an SS guard at Auschwitz, a German court said Friday.

The Ellwangen state court said Hans Lipschis is suffering from "worsening dementia" and couldn't be tried. He was charged with 10,510 counts of accessory to murder on allegations he served as a guard at the death camp from 1941 to 1943.

Stuttgart prosecutors said they hadn't yet decided whether to appeal the decision.

The court released Lipschis from custody in December, saying it had "considerable doubt" over his fitness to face trial.

His attorney, Achim Baechle, told The Associated Press that after his release, Lipschis suffered a fall on his return home. He was then operated on, and is now in a nursing home.

"I assume the prosecutors will appeal the court's decision, but I think the decision is absolutely correct," he said.

Lipschis was deported from the U.S. in the early 1980s for lying about his Nazi past when he arrived in Chicago in 1956. He has lived in Germany since.

He has acknowledged being assigned to an SS guard unit at Auschwitz but maintains he only served as a cook and was not involved in any war crimes. □

UK woman who killed 3 on spree gets life

LONDON (AP) — A British woman who killed three men and attacked two others during a 10-day spree was told Friday that she will spend the rest of her life in jail.

Joanna Dennehy smirked as she was sentenced by Judge Robin Spencer to life with no possibility of parole — only the third British woman to receive the country's toughest sentence.

Dennehy had pleaded guilty to murdering three acquaintances, whose bodies were found in rural ditches near her hometown of Peterborough in eastern England. After stabbing them to death in March, she drove to Hereford in western England where she stabbed and injured two strangers out walking their dogs. She also admitted two counts of attempted

murder and three of preventing the lawful and decent burial of a corpse. Passing sentence at London's Central Criminal Court, the judge told 31-year-old Dennehy she was "a cruel, calculating, selfish and manipulative serial killer." He said the killer had written him a letter saying she was not sorry for the murders. He added that Dennehy

told a psychiatrist: "I killed to see how I would feel, to see if I was as cold as I thought I was, then it got more-ish."

One witness told the trial that Dennehy had boasted of killing eight people, though she is not accused of more murders.

Three men were sentenced for helping Dennehy dispose of the bodies and giving her shelter. □

Tokyo's Mt. Gox bitcoin exchange files for bankruptcy

YURI KAGEYAMA
AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The Mt. Gox bitcoin exchange in Tokyo filed for bankruptcy protection Friday and its chief executive said 850,000 bitcoins, worth several hundred million dollars, are unaccounted for. The exchange's CEO Mark Karpeles appeared before Japanese TV news cameras, bowing deeply. He said a weakness in the exchange's systems was behind a massive loss of the virtual currency involving 750,000 bitcoins from users and 100,000 of the company's own bitcoins. That would amount to about \$425 million at recent prices.

The online exchange's unplugging earlier this week and accusations it had suffered a catastrophic theft have drawn renewed regulatory attention to a currency created in 2009 as a way to make transactions across borders without third parties such as banks.

It remains unclear if the missing bitcoins were stolen, voided by technological flaws or both.

"I am sorry for the troubles I have caused all the people," Karpeles, a Frenchman, said in Japanese at a Tokyo court.

Karpeles had not made a public appearance since rumors of the exchange's insolvency surfaced last month. He said in a web post Wednesday that he was working to resolve Mt. Gox's problems.

The loss is a giant setback to the currency's image because its boosters have promoted bitcoin's cryptography as protecting it from counterfeiting and theft. Bitcoin proponents have insisted that Mt. Gox is an isolated case, caused by the company's technological failures, and the potential of virtual currencies remains great.

Debts at Mt. Gox totaled more than 6.5 billion yen (\$65 million), surpassing its assets, according to Teikoku Databank, which monitors bankruptcies.

Just hours before the bankruptcy filing, Japanese Fi-

nance Minister Taro Aso had scoffed that a collapse was only inevitable.

"No one recognizes them as a real currency," he told reporters. "I expected such a thing to collapse."

Japan's financial regulators have been reluctant to intervene in the Mt. Gox situation, saying they don't have jurisdiction over something that's not a real currency.

They pointed to the Consumer Affairs Agency, which deals with product safety, as one possible place where disgruntled users may go for help.

The agency's minister Masako Mori urged extreme caution about using or investing in bitcoins. The agency has been deluged with calls about bitcoins since earlier this year.

"We're at a loss for how to help them," said Yuko Otsuki, who works in the agency's counseling department.

It's hard to know how many people around the world own bitcoins, but the currency has attracted outside media attention and the fascination of millions as an increasing number of large retailers such as Overstock.com begin to accept it.

Speculative investors have jumped into the bitcoin fray, too, sending the currency's value fluctuating wildly in recent months. In December, the value of a single bitcoin hit an all-time high of \$1,200. One bitcoin has cost about \$500 lately.

Roger Ver, a Tokyo resident who has provided seed capital for bitcoin ventures such as Blockchain.info, a registry of bitcoin transactions, said he believes bitcoin will survive, possibly emerging with better technology that's safer for users. He said Mt. Gox people were likely sincere but had failed to run their business properly.

"Mt. Gox is a horrible tragedy. A lot of people lost a lot of money there, myself included," he said ahead of the bankruptcy filing. "I hope we can use this as a learning experience."

Some countries have reacted sternly to bitcoin's emer-

gence, but many people remain fans of its potential. Vietnam's communist government said Thursday that

Late last year, China banned its banks and payment systems from handling bitcoin, although

tively banned them. There was still considerable appetite for bitcoin in China, where it has become



Mt. Gox CEO Mark Karpeles, sitting at second right, attends a press conference at the Justice Ministry in Tokyo Friday night, Feb. 28, 2014. The Mt. Gox bitcoin exchange in Tokyo filed for bankruptcy protection, acknowledging that a significant amount of the virtual currency had gone missing. Karpeles appeared before Japanese TV news cameras Friday, bowing deeply for several minutes. He said a weakness in the exchange's systems was behind the massive loss of the virtual currency.

(AP Photo/Kyodo News)

trading in bitcoin and other electronic currencies is illegal, and warned its citizens not to use or invest in them.

people still use them online. Thailand earlier put a blanket prohibition on using bitcoins and Russia has effec-

attractive as an investment since tightly-regulated state banks offer very low interest rates on deposits. □



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Another 'Cuban Five' agent reports back in Havana

PETER ORSI

Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — A second member of the "Cuban Five" returned to the Caribbean island and a hero's welcome Friday, a day after leaving a prison in the United States, where he spent 15 years behind bars on spy-related charges. Fernando Gonzalez arrived at the Havana airport around noon local time, state television and the government-run website Cubadebate reported. They promised more details later. The 50-year-old Gonzalez and four others were arrested in 1998 and convicted in 2001 in Miami on charges including conspiracy and failure to register as foreign agents in the U.S. Prosecutors argued at trial that they sought to infiltrate military bases and monitored militant Cuban exile groups opposed to the communist government in Havana. Havana hails the men as heroes and maintains they were only keeping tabs on

the exile groups to prevent terrorist attacks in Cuba. It says they were no threat to U.S. sovereignty, and calls the long prison sentences unjust.

Rene Gonzalez — no relation — became the first to finish his sentence in 2011. He returned to Cuba last year after serving part of a judge-imposed period of supervised release and renouncing his American citizenship.

The others are still behind bars in the United States.

"Those of us who love (Fernando Gonzalez) and admire him celebrate him today," fellow agent Gerardo Hernandez, who is still in prison, said in a statement published by Cuban media.

"Convinced that our struggle (to be released) is reinforced by another standard-bearer, we sent him a big hug," he said.

A celebratory concert in honor of the Cuban Five was planned for Saturday night at the University of Havana.



Rene Gonzalez, of the "Cuban Five," speaks during an interview in Havana, Cuba. Gonzalez was an unknown young pilot in 1990 when he pretended to steal a crop duster in Cuba and flew to Florida, using cover as a Cuban defector to spy on targets in the United States. The Cuba Five refers to intelligence agents in the employ of Fidel Castro's Cuba, they were arrested in the United States in 1998 and given terms ranging from 15 years to consecutive life sentences on charges including conspiracy and failure to register as foreign agents.

(AP Photo/Franklin Reyes)

Fernando Gonzalez was originally sentenced to 19 years, but that was reduced on appeal along with the sentences of two

others.

Antonio Guerrero is the next scheduled to be released, in September 2017. The case of the Cuban Five

has sometimes been linked to that of Alan Gross, a U.S. government subcontractor who was arrested in Cuba in 2009. □

Up in smoke:

Long-ash contest at Cuba cigar festival



A participant in the competition for the longest ash is dizzy by the smoke of his cigar during the XVI Cuba Cigar festival, in Havana, Cuba, Thursday, Feb. 27, 2014. Cigar enthusiasts from around the world come to Cuba during the annual Cigar Festival to visit tobacco farms and factories and savor new cigar brands.

(AP Photo/Ramon Espinosa)

ANDREA RODRIGUEZ

Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Pungent smoke filled the room, obscuring the lights and leav-

ing clothing and skin reeking. There were applause, shouts and laughter, and above all plenty of H. Upmann Sir Winstons — for-

midable 7-inch (17.8-centimeter) Cuban cigars.

More than 450 stogie aficionados took part in an unusual contest this week at

Havana's annual marquee Cigar Festival: competing to see who could create the longest unbroken ash. "I love it," Argentine sommelier Flavio Lanfredi said good-naturedly despite falling out of contention early on. "For me this is like going to Mecca, or a kid entering a toy store and they tell you to grab whatever you want, it's yours. It's really exciting."

In a cavernous room in Havana's Palace of Conventions, contestants exhaled clouds of smoke and handled their cigars gingerly to keep the gray ash intact as long as possible. They lolled on luxurious leather chairs set amid tables holding dozens of ashtrays, lighters, chocolate-flavored hard candy and sniffers of aged Cuban rum.

Many, like Lanfredi, lost their ashes before smoking even halfway through.

Others managed to keep going until their cigars were little more than tiny stubs.

"It was a little bit stressful, and I'm somewhat dizzy," said Cuban restaurateur Andres Espinosa, one of the better finishers with a 6.2-inch (15.8-cm) ash.

Just over a half-hour in, only a handful of finalists remained. Judges milled about the room handing out rulers to measure the results. It would be hard to top Olivia Terri, also from Cuba, who smoked her Sir Winston down to a stub with an ash that grew to 6.6 inches (16.7 cm) before it crumbled.

The Sir Winston is a chubby cigar with a rich brown color and a hint of toasted gold. It's hand-rolled with a selection of tobacco leaves from the western province of Pinar del Rio, the cradle of Cuba's tobacco country. □



Loyal visitors honored at the Aruba Divi Phoenix Resort



PALM BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a group of loyal and friendly Visitors of Aruba, at the Divi Phoenix Beach Resort, as Distinguished Visitors and Ambassadors of Goodwill. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for

10-to-19 and 20-or-more consecutive years. The honorees were Stephen Teta, Norman and Danelle Bodine, Frank and Judy Michienzi, Robert and Jami Snow, Thomas and Charlene Puzzo, Butch and Betty Merlino, and Jim and Jan Gangi. All the honorees are loyal members of the Divi Phoenix and they love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the

weather, the beaches, the restaurants, and the casinos, and because Aruba feels like a second home, where the people are like family and the Divi Phoenix is their home away from home. The certificates were presented by Ernest Giel representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with Avril, Pedro Vargas and Gerritt Griffith representing the Divi Phoenix. □

VIP Viewing Deck During Carnival Has Been Postponed

ORANJESTAD - Construction of the elevated bridge above L.G.Smith

Boulevard at Renaissance Aruba Resort and Casino has been post-

poned. The bridge, which was to serve as a VIP viewing deck dur-

ing Carnival, will instead be erected for events later in 2014. □



In honor of Aruba 60 años Carnival:

The Central Bank of Aruba introduces commemorative coin!

ORANJESTAD - The Central Bank of Aruba has announced that the silver 5 Florin commemorative coin "Aruba 60 años Carnival 2014" will be obtainable as of Tuesday, March 4, 2014.

This year Aruba is celebrating its 60 years of Carni-



val! Aruba's Carnival celebration is well-known for its spectacular and colorful creations. In honor of this anniversary celebration, the Central Bank of Aruba (CBA) is issuing this commemorative coin, which reflects the colorful and sparkling fantasy of Aru-

ba's Carnival.

Specifications: Metal: Silver; Diameter: 38mm; Weight: 25 gram; Quality: Proof; and Denomination: 5 Florin. The Central Bank of Aruba is located at the J.E. Irausquin Boulevard # 8 and is open 8:30am - 11:45am and 1:15pm - 3:30pm. □

Aruba's love for the Papiamentu Language is well and alive!

EAGLE BEACH - The Environmental and Health Committee at La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino, hosted a tribute to the Papiamentu language, as part of the Year of Papiamentu celebration. The evening in the presence of various linguists, poets,

authors and other invited guests, is still fresh in the mind of many people. On the occasion of the tribute the resort unveiled a beautiful poster with a poem titled "Di Ken Anto" (From who, then?) by Belen Kock-Marchena. The poem "Di Ken Anto" sends out a call

for Papiamentu to get the recognition it deserves. The intention of the poster was to plant a seed of lasting love for Papiamentu within everyone, especially children and teens.

A seed that would serve to create awareness of the importance of continuing




to cultivate love, respect and recognition of Papiamentu as this island's mother language.

Wishing to leave a legacy, the most appropriate spot for the poster was deemed the National Library of Aruba, located in Oranjestad and San Nicolas, as both locations receive regular visits from kids and teens. The Environmental & Health Committee also gifted a copy of the poem poster to Colegio Hilario Angela, the school adopted by the resort.

The Committee would like to thank Belen Kock-Marchena for the privilege of being able to use her poem "Di Ken Anto" for the beautiful poster, and would also like to thank Astrid Britten and Judith Ling of the

National Library of Aruba for their excellent collaboration on this gesture.

The Environmental and Health Committee of La Cabana Beach Resort & Casino is inviting all tourist, government and/or commercial establishments to follow this lead and bestow recognition and honor on other local poets.

The community of Aruba is invited to visit the National Library in Oranjestad or/and San Nicolas to admire the poster and reflect on its valuable message.

Let's commemorate the International Day of Mother Languages and focus on, recognize and celebrate our language, not just on Friday, January 21st, but year round. □

During Carnival 60th Anniversary Celebration:

SCHT Students, from Surinam, on a Field Trip in Aruba!



ORANJESTAD - Students of the Suriname College of Hospitality and Tourism (SCCHT), are currently visiting Aruba on a field trip, as part of their curriculum for the Festival & Special Event Management, Part

2, course and the Event Risk Management & Safety course, both designed for second and third year students.

The courses, which are part of the Minor in Meetings & Special Events Manage-

ment introduce the students into the events industry, and what better place to acquaint them with that segment of the market, than Aruba during its colorful Carnival season.

During their ten-day here

group members will gain first-hand experience of the 60th Anniversary of Carnival in Aruba.

Their main goal is to gain enough field experience so they could organize a similar festival in Suriname, a festival with the potential of becoming a major tourism product.

While here, besides attending both Carnival parades in St Nicholas and in Oranjestad the group also visited the Marriott Aruba Resort & Stellaris Casino, the Radisson Aruba Resort, Casino & Spa, the Hyatt Regency Aruba Resort & Casino.

Group members will also attend a presentation by the local Carnival organization S.A.C., in addition to a presentation by the Aruba Tourism Authority, ATA, discussing Aruba's success as a major tourist destination.

SCCHT is a privately-owned

college,

founded in 2002, aiming to meet the urgent need for skilled and qualified personnel and higher vocational education in hospitality and tourism management in Suriname. The institute, which was the first of its kind in that country, initiated an educational program especially designed for people wishing to make a career in the hospitality and tourism industry, thus creating new educational opportunities for the community.

The school offers a four-year Bachelor of Science Degree Program in Hospitality and Tourism Management accredited by the University Council of Jamaica (UCJ), an internationally recognized accreditation body.

Pictured here the group touring the Marriott Aruba Resort & Stellaris Casino. □



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McIlroy hitting his stride at Honda Classic

DOUG FERGUSON

AP Golf Writer

PALM BEACH GARDENS,

Florida (AP) — Rory McIlroy recovered from a sloppy start Friday with six birdies in a 10-hole stretch for a 4-under 66 to build a three-shot lead among early starters at the Honda Classic.

A growing gallery in warm sunshine at PGA National saw a familiar game — the McIlroy who won the Honda Classic two years ago to reach No. 1 in the world for the first time, not the guy who walked off the course last year at the height of his frustrations.

Swinging freely and putting beautifully, McIlroy hit his stride on his back nine with four birdies in five holes, including the par-5 No. 3 when he smashed a drive some 35 yards behind Adam Scott and had only a 6-iron into the green on the 539-yard hole.

At 11-under 129, he was three shots clear of Russell Henley, who had a 69. Lee Westwood (65) and Russell Knox (63) were four shots behind.



Golfer Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland, watches his shot on the 12th hole during the second round of the Honda Classic golf tournament, Friday, Feb. 28, 2014 in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Continued on page 21

Associated Press



In this March 13, 2013 file photo, residents greet Kotzebue musher John Baker as he nears the finish line in the Iditarod Trail race in Nome, Alaska.

Associated Press

MARK THIESSEN
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP)

— The Iditarod across Alaska kicks off this weekend as usual, after warm winter

Iditarod sled dog race kicks off this weekend

weather nearly prompted officials to move the start hundreds of miles (kilometers) north to Fairbanks for the first time in a decade. Temperatures have dropped, improving trail conditions and allowing the 42nd running of the world's most famous sled dog race to start as normal in Willow, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Anchorage. The 1,000-

mile (1,600-kilometer) race spans two mountain ranges, dangerous wilderness and the wind-whipped Bering Sea coast. The ceremonial start, with a festival-type atmosphere, is on Saturday in downtown Anchorage. Mushers will take a leisurely 11-mile (17-kilometer) jaunt on sled dog trails within the state's largest city, with fans lining streets and urban trails to

cheer on their favorites. On Sunday, the race turns serious as mushers drive their dogs to Willow for the official restart. Sixty-nine racers are expected. Mitch Seavey, who became the oldest champion last year at 52, said the changing conditions are nothing new, noting it rained on mushers last year.

Continued on page 22

Masked James leads Heat past Knicks

The Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — LeBron James scored 31 points, Dwyane Wade added 23 and the Miami Heat used a huge third quarter to run away and eventually rout the New York Knicks 108-82 on Thursday night.

NBA Capsules James donned a dark mask to protect his broken nose and was clearly unencumbered, hitting 13 of 19 shots and topping 30 points for the fifth consecutive game.

Wade shot 10 for 13 from the field, and Miami outscored New York 23-3 over the final 7:02 of the third and won its sixth straight. The Heat shot 61 percent, while the Knicks shot 37 percent.

Carmelo Anthony scored 29 points for New York, but none in the final 21:38. Tyson Chandler had 19 points and 16 rebounds, and J.R. Smith added 11 points. The Knicks fell to

2-10 in February.

WIZARDS 134, RAPTORS 129, 3OT

TORONTO (AP) — Trevor Ariza scored the go-ahead basket on a fast-break layup with 1:20 left in the third overtime and Washington outlasted Toronto for its fifth straight victory.

Marcin Gortat fouled out with 31 points and 12 rebounds, John Wall also had 31 points, and Ariza fouled out with 16 points and 10 rebounds.

DeMar DeRozan scored 34 points in 58 minutes for Toronto, and Kyle Lowry fouled out with 18 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds in 54 minutes. Greivis Vasquez added a season-high 26 points.

NETS 112, NUGGETS 89

DENVER (AP) — Paul Pierce scored 18 points and Brooklyn rebounded from its worst loss in more than 10 years.

Joe Johnson, Marcus Thornton, and Mason Plumlee each added 10 points for the Nets, who snapped a six-game losing streak in Denver. The Nets hadn't won in the Mile High City since a 112-102 victory on Jan. 27, 2007.

Randy Foye had 15 points to lead Denver, which has lost four in a row and nine of 10. Brooklyn's 7-foot center Jason Collins, the NBA's first openly gay player appearing in his third game since being signed to a 10-day contract, was given a round of applause from the crowd when he entered the game for the first time with 8:02 left. Collins finished with three points.

PACERS 101, BUCKS 96

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Roy Hibbert had 24 points and 12 rebounds to help Indiana rally to beat Milwaukee.

Paul George and Lance Stephenson each scored 18 points for NBA-leading



Miami Heat small forward LeBron James (6) celebrates after scoring against the New York Knicks during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Miami, Thursday, Feb. 27, 2014. Miami won 108-82. Associated Press

Indiana. The Pacers, 44-13 overall and an NBA-best 28-3 at home, blew a 17-point lead in the first half.

The Bucks, an NBA-worst 11-46, tied it at 50 at the half and built a six-point

lead in the third quarter. Brandon Knight had 23 points for Milwaukee, and Khris Middleton added 22.

Before the game, the Bucks waived forward Caron Butler after agreeing to a contract buyout. □



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NHL Capsules

Pavelski's hat trick lifts Sharks past Flyers 7-3

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Joe Pavelski had a hat trick to move into a tie for second in the NHL in goals and the San Jose Sharks beat the Philadelphia Flyers 7-3 Thursday night in the first game for both teams following the Olympic break. Raffi Torres and Logan Couture each scored twice in their return to the San Jose lineup following injuries. Pavelski, one of four Sharks Olympians, scored all three of his goals in a dominating second period when San Jose outscored the Flyers 5-0.

Torres, who was making his 2013-14 debut after injuring his knee in the preseason,



Hammond made his NHL debut, stopping all nine shots he faced.

KINGS 2, FLAMES 0

CALGARY, Alberta (AP) — Dustin Brown had a goal and an assist and Jonathan Quick made 25 saves as Los Angeles made it back-to-back wins with a victory over Calgary.

On a night when Calgary honored Canadian Olympians in a pregame ceremony, a pair of Team USA players were the big stars. Quick was steady all night in earning his third shutout of the season and 29th of his career.

After scoring the first goal three minutes into the game, Brown helped the Kings get an important insurance goal, setting up Dwight King in front of the net 3:30 into the third period.

RANGERS 2, BLACKHAWKS 1

NEW YORK (AP) — Cam Talbot, subbing for resting Olympian Henrik Lundqvist, stopped 31 shots, and Derick Brassard and Rick Nash scored as New York returned from the Sochi break with a victory over Chicago.

Talbot got the nod after Lundqvist received extended work in Sweden's run to the gold medal game in the Olympics. Talbot made the most of his opportunity, getting his 11th career win in 18 NHL games — all this season.

He was 11.6 seconds away from a shutout, but Peter Regin scored after goalie Corey Crawford was pulled. Patrick Kane nearly tied it seconds later, but Talbot stopped him with his pad.

New York has won six of seven. Lundqvist is expected to play Saturday in Philadelphia when the Rangers start a back-to-back set.

CANADIENS 6, PENGUINS 5, SO

PITTSBURGH (AP) — David Desharnais scored the lone goal in the shootout, leading Montreal to victory over Pittsburgh. □

Winnipeg Jets' Michael Frolik (67) is checked by Phoenix Coyotes' Oliver Ekman-Larsson (23) during third-period NHL hockey game action in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Thursday, Feb. 27, 2014.

Associated Press

capped the second-period barrage with his second tally of the game with 2.2 seconds left. Couture, who missed the previous 16 games due to hand surgery, netted his 15th goal of the season in the period. Andrej Meszaros had a highlight-reel tally and Matt Read and Brayden Schenn also scored for the Flyers, who had won four straight prior to taking a 19-day break for the Olympics.

RED WINGS 6, SENATORS 1 OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Johan Franzen scored three goals to lead Detroit past Ottawa.

Riley Sheahan, Tomas Jurco and Tomas Tatar also scored, and Jonas Gustavsson stopped 37 shots for the Red Wings (28-20-12), who have a five-point lead over the Senators (26-23-11) for the final wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

Bobby Ryan scored for the Senators, who were playing their first game since the Olympic break. Robin Lehner allowed six goals on 15 shots before Andrew

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Federer defeats Djokovic in Dubai semifinal

SANDRA HARWITT
Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Fourth-seeded Roger Federer ended top-seeded Novak Djokovic's chance of defending his Dubai Championships title with a 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 semifinal win on Friday.

Federer will be looking for his sixth Dubai title when he plays third-seeded Tomas Berdych of the Czech Republic in Saturday's final.

Berdych reached his second consecutive Dubai Championships final with a tough 7-5, 7-5 semifinal win over seventh-seeded Philipp Kohlschreiber of Germany.

Federer now leads Djokovic 17-15 in their career head-to-head meetings. He also leads Djokovic 13-12 when competing on hard courts. "He deserved to win," Djokovic said. "He played in the second part of the match better and was more aggressive and

played all around the court really well."

Djokovic had won their last three matches and nine of their last 12 matches. He's twice won three consecutive matches against Federer, but never has won four in a row.

"Right now I'm just happy that I was able to win the match," Federer said. "I don't care so much about the head-to-heads."

"But it's nice to be in the finals here in Dubai again." For the first set-and-a-half, Djokovic looked as if he would have an easy time reaching the final.

Djokovic established an early lead when Federer lost his serve in an error-filled second game of the first set.

Serving at 5-3, Djokovic won the first set on his third set point of the game with a clean ace down the middle.

Midway through the second set, it seemed as

though Federer remembered that his new part-time coach Stefan Edberg, who is not in Dubai, is urging him to play more offensively.

From that point on, Federer started to come into the net and volley more often, which was an effective strategy that Djokovic couldn't handle.

"I think I was able to play a bit more aggressive as the match went on," Federer said. "For me it was just a matter of playing consistent, but remain aggressive."

"Clearly it was close, but I think I got the right balance."

Djokovic doesn't seem to be interested in learning to use the net effectively now that he has Boris Becker, who was a serve and volley type of player, as his new head coach.

"We've been working on certain details in my game, but it's nothing significant



Roger Federer of Switzerland returns the ball to Novak Djokovic of Serbia during a semifinal match of the Dubai Tennis Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Friday, Feb. 28, 2014.
Associated Press

that I'm going to change," Djokovic said. "I'm not going to play serve and volley."

In the second set, Djokovic surrendered his serve in an error-riddled sixth game to put Federer in position to even the score at one set apiece.

Federer broke Djokovic's serve in the first and fifth games of the third set to set up the win. In the final game, Federer saved two break points when serving

for the match in the final game.

Berdych enters the final on a 11-match winning streak. He arrived in Dubai having won his first title in over a year at Rotterdam two weeks ago.

"I think he's playing very well right now," Federer said. "This is a big match for him tomorrow (Saturday) as well."

"I will try to stop him and play a good match myself." □

Honda Classic

Continued from page 18

Phil Mickelson, playing PGA National for the first since he was an amateur, had a short week. He made only four birdies over two rounds, went bunker-to-bunker around the 16th green for double bogey and had a 71. Mickelson was virtually certain to miss the cut.

Tiger Woods was among the late starters. He began his round at 1 over, outside the cut line and 12 shots behind McIlroy.

"This year is obviously a lot different," McIlroy said. "Got off to a good start. I'm confident. I'm playing well. This is the second straight tournament I've opened with a 63, so if I can keep building on these good starts, then hopefully I can start converting."

After a 63 in Dubai, he said he was pressing too much in the final round and wound up in a tie for ninth. Friday was another step in

the right direction, despite two errant tee shots on the 11th and 12th holes that led to bogeys. His round changed with a tee shot into 6 feet on the 16th hole for a birdie, and then a 12-foot birdie on the 18th to wrap up his front nine and earn back the two shots he had dropped.

After a 45-foot birdie attempt on the second hole rimmed all the way around and out of the cup, Boy Wonder took off. He two-putted the par-5 third. He hit a wedge into 4 feet on the next hole. He rolled in a 30-foot birdie putt down the hill at the par-5 fifth. Then, after a tough par save on the sixth, he sank another 30-foot birdie putt that McIlroy made look routine.

The gallery is kept 100 yards from the green, so the only applause came from a few marshals. It sounded like a tap-in for par. McIlroy reacted that way, too.

"Watching Rory play is amazing when he's swinging like this," Scott said after his own great recovery.



Tiger Woods hits out of a bunker on the 10th hole during the second round of the Honda Classic golf tournament, Friday, Feb. 28, 2014 in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.
Associated Press

The Masters champ put shots in the water on the 16th and 17th holes, both times making double bogey, and it looked as though his return to golf would be a short one. But the Australian ran off four birdies on the front nine for a 70.

The soft conditions didn't hurt after rain earlier in the week. McIlroy won the U.S.

Open at Congressional by eight shots in 2011 on such course conditions.

Henley won as rookie at the Sony Open, but he has had only two top 10s since then, and he has failed to crack the top 25 this season.

Mickelson was pleased with how he was driving the ball, but couldn't figure out why he didn't make many birdies. The

question for Mickelson was whether to fly home to San Diego for four days before the Cadillac Championship at Doral, or stick to his plan of playing the pro-member tournament at Seminole on Monday.

The rest of the field is more concerned with catching McIlroy.

Scott saw it in Australia late last year when McIlroy beat him on the last hole for his only win of 2013. McIlroy has been on an upward swing ever since, with chances to win on Sunday in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

McIlroy practiced with putting coach Dave Stockton last week in Arizona, the first time they had worked together in nearly three months. They made a few minor changes, and McIlroy feels more comfortable on the greens.

It shows in the statistics — 49 putts through 36 holes.

"That's probably the lowest putting total after 36 I've probably had, maybe in my career," he said. "So it's obviously going in the right direction." □

Iditarod

Continued from page 18

Another year, there was a huge temperature swing, from minus 50 (-46 C) to 50 degrees above zero (10 C). "That's one of the neat things about the race is that you need to be prepared for anything," Seavey said.

Concerns about the trail were in areas south of the Alaska Range and in the mountains themselves, race marshal Mark Nordman said. But snow and especially colder temperatures after a long January thaw have alleviated worries there and in areas such as the Yentna River.

Crews of up to 15 people have been working on the trail daily for the past month and a half, he said. They cut back brush, smoothed out moguls and created crossings over small streams by felling trees and piling snow on



This March 13, 2013 file photo show Musher Michelle Phillips of Tagish, Yukon Territory, Canada, makes the final push in the Iditarod, on the Bering Sea for the finish line outside Nome, Alaska.

Associated Press

them.

The first musher should take about 10 days to arrive at the finish in Nome on Alaska's western coast. The winner receives \$50,000 and a new truck.

But the Iditarod is not without its critics. People for the

Ethical Treatment of Animals say 23 dogs have died in the race since 2004.

"Forty years of suffering and death are proof that the Iditarod will never be safe for dogs—it must be canceled permanently," Daphna Nachminovitch of

PETA said in an email to The Associated Press.

Dallas Seavey, Mitch Seavey's son and the youngest Iditarod champion at 25 in 2012, said an unknown in this year's race was the large number of Scandinavian mushers, in-

cluding five Norwegians and one Swede.

"Those guys know how to run dogs," Dallas said. "And they may be new to the Iditarod, or have less Iditarod races under the belts, but they're not new to mushing."

"It's about dogmanship, and those guys know that game." Robert Sorlie, 56, of Norway, has been in the Iditarod four times and won twice, in 2003 and 2005. He's back after a six-year absence.

Also running separate teams are Allen Moore, who last month won his second consecutive Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race, and his wife, Aily Zirkle, who finished second to both Seaveys in the last two years.

One notable name not starting was Lance Mackey, a four-time champion, who was sitting out this year due to health concerns and because he has young dogs.

Ferrer retires in Mexico, Murray into semis

CARLOS RODRIGUEZ
ACAPULCO, Mexico (AP) — Top-seeded David Ferrer withdrew from his Mexican Open quarterfinal against South Africa's Kevin Anderson in the second set on Thursday due to a left thigh strain.

Ferrer's exit leaves Andy Murray as the big favorite to win the Mexican Open 500. The Scot overcame a poor start to beat Frenchmen Gilles Simon 1-6, 7-6 (4), 6-2.

"It's tough to win matches when you get down like that, I've been struggling with my service in the first two matches", said Murray, who will play against the winner of the match between Latvia's Ernests Gulbis and Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov.

Murray has beaten Simon 12 straight times.

Third-ranked Ferrer was leading 6-4, 2-2 when he suffered an inner thigh strain in his left leg. After seeking treatment in the locker room, the Spaniard returned to the court but lost the next two points be-

fore retiring.

Ferrer said he will have scans on Friday and then assess his recovery.

"I'm very sad because I was playing great", Ferrer said. "I still do not know the extent of the injury."

"I'll have to wait and see before taking a determination."

The day was going so well for me and then this happened".

Anderson will next play Ukraine's Alexandr Dolgoplov, who defeated Ivo Karlovic of Croatia, 6-4, 7-6 (4). Anderson, who last week lost the Delray Beach final, will be playing in his first semifinals of an Open 500.

"It's unfortunate to win a match like this, but hopefully he gets better", Anderson said after the match.

"I talked to him and he said that it happened when he was trying to go for a ball and felt his leg tweak a little bit".

On the women's side of the tournament, top-seeded Dominika Cibulkova of Slovakia defeated New



Spain's David Ferrer falls after failing a return while playing South Africa's Kevin Anderson at the Mexican Tennis Open in Acapulco, Mexico, Thursday Feb. 27, 2014. Ferrer retired from the match and Anderson won.

Associated Press

Zealand's Marina Erakovic 6-4, 7-5 to set up semifinal against China's Shuai Zhang.

Zhang, the eighth seed, ousted Ajla Tomljanovic of

Croatia 6-1, 5-7, 6-2.

Canada's Eugenie Bouchard suffered a surprise 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 loss to France's Caroline Garcia, 89th in the WTA

rankings, will play in the semifinals against American Christina McHale, who defeated third-seeded Kai Kanepi from Estonia 6-1, 2-6, 6-4.

Push for Web addresses in era of search, apps

ANICK JESDANUN

AP Technology Writer

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) —

In the early days, you typed in a domain name address to reach a website. Then came the ability to reach websites directly through a search engine. The mobile era brought us phone apps for accessing services without either.

Yet the organization in charge of Internet addresses is pushing a major expansion in domain name suffixes. At least 160 suffixes have been added since October to join the ranks of ".com," ".org" and scores of country-specific ones such as ".uk" for the United Kingdom. Hundreds of other proposals are being reviewed.

Why bother in this mobile-heavy era?

"Finding what you need on the Web will take many paths," said Fadi Chehade, head of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN.

Even if you're using search, domain names might make search engines smarter, Chehade said in an interview at the Mobile World Congress wireless show, which ended Thursday in Barcelona, Spain.

For instance, a search engine might be able to classify something as a dating site because it carries the suffix ".dating." Before, it would have to infer from



A visitor checks his phone at the Mobile World Congress, the world's largest mobile phone trade show in Barcelona, Spain, Wednesday, Feb. 26, 2014.

text on the site, and search results might inadvertently include general discussions on dating.

Likewise, a search engine might favor restaurants ending in ".berlin" when you're looking for food options there, rather than bloggers discussing what they ate during visits to Berlin.

He said domain names will also be useful for marketing and branding:

— An Internet address is easier to include on a business card or advertisement.

— Companies can give different services distinctive addresses, such as "sales.samsung" and "repairs.samsung," so that customers don't have to hunt for that on the main website.

— Neighborhoods can form around suffixes such as ".berlin" and ".tokyo." Restaurants, florists and transit systems would use city suffixes rather than a generic ".com." There are so many sites already under ".com" that getting an easy-to-remember name is difficult. With some of the

new ones, congestion isn't a problem.

There have been nearly 2,000 proposals for new domain names, though about 150 have been withdrawn for various reasons.

More than 1,000 have been approved and are either in the system already or are awaiting signed contracts between their backers and ICANN. More than 600 are being held up because of multiple bids for the same suffix.

The ones in the system include ".dating," ".berlin"

and ".tokyo." Samsung's new suffix is in Korean, one of 18 additions to use non-English characters. Others include ".cab," ".ceo," ".dance," ".futbol," ".mango" and ".sexy."

Chehade said websites using these suffixes could start appearing in April.

Jay Sullivan, chief operating officer of the group behind the Firefox Web browser and operating system for phones, said the new suffixes might push even more people to search. □

Right now, he said, people

Associated Press

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A call to give consumers free credit scores

TARA SIEGEL BERNARD
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In its new role as consumer credit watchdog, the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau on this week urged credit card companies to give customers free copies of their credit scores - crucial pieces of financial information used to evaluate qualifications for mortgages, credit cards and even certain types of insurance and rental apartments.

While the agency is not requiring the companies to provide the information, it sent a letter to top executives at the nation's largest credit card companies and asked them to make the scores available in custom-

ers' monthly statements or online.

A few card issuers recently began providing the scores on their own - well before the agency's call - and others are said to be in discussions to follow suit.

The all-powerful credit scores - the most popular of which are the FICO scores created by the Fair Isaac Corp. - are based on the information in an individual's credit reports, which are generated by the three major credit bureaus, Equifax, Experian and TransUnion. The agencies, which maintain files on more than 200 million consumers, have long been criticized for making it difficult for consumers to fix er-

rors in their reports.

"Making consumers' credit scores freely available on their monthly statement or online makes it easier for them to spot problems with their credit report," said Richard Cordray, director of the consumer bureau.

That is one of the main drivers of the agency's call to make the scores more widely available: The hope is that when consumers notice a change in their score, they might check their credit reports for errors. Consumers are entitled to one free report every year from each of the three major credit reporting agencies through the website annualcreditreport.com.

At least three credit card

issuers have begun to provide certain types of free FICO scores to their customers to differentiate themselves from rivals and to educate their cardholders. Discover, for instance, started offering free FICO scores to users of its "Discover it" cards in November, and it recently expanded that to millions of additional cardholders.

Barclaycard, the U.S. card unit of Barclays, and First Bankcard, the card-issuing arm of the First National Bank of Omaha, also began providing free FICO scores last fall.

FICO scores, which are on a 300- to 850-point scale, are used in most lending decisions.

Citigroup dips 2013 profit on Mexico fraud

JOSHUA FREED
AP Business Writer

Citigroup said a fraud at its Mexican banking unit will slice \$235 million from last year's net income.

The bank said on Friday that Mexican oil services company Oceanografia SA de CV apparently submitted falsified invoices to get loans it wasn't entitled to. The invoices were supposed to back \$585 million in loans, but Citi could only verify the backing for \$185 million.

Citi's large Mexican bank, Banco Nacional de Mexico, had been lending money to OSA to cover work that OSA was doing for Mexico's state-owned oil company Petróleos Mexicanos, or Pemex.

The invoices were falsified to show that Pemex had approved the work, and then were processed by a Banamex worker, Citi CEO Mike Corbat said in statement Friday. The invoices were then processed by a Banamex worker.

Citi said it learned of the problem on Feb. 11 after OSA was suspended from getting more Mexican government contracts. Citi has been working with Pemex and said its investigation is ongoing.

It said it believes "the fraud is isolated to this particular client" within Banamex's program for lending money against accounts receivable.

"We have been responding forcefully over the past week by assessing the overall exposure to Citi, coordinating with law enforcement, pursuing recovery of the misappropriated funds, and seeking accountability for anyone involved," Corbat said.

He said Citi is doing a "rapid review" through Banamex, and all of Citi, of programs similar to the one involved in this case.

In January, Citi reported 2013 net income of \$15.8 billion.

The changes dropped its full-year profit to \$15.56 billion.

Strong February erases S&P 500's January loss

KEN SWEET
AP Markets Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After two months of trading, the stock market is back where it started.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 4.3 percent

spent the month making up the ground they lost in January.

"February looked a lot like January, just moving in the opposite direction," said Scott Clemons, chief investment strategist with Brown

stocks — two traditional "safe" places for investors because of their low volatility and higher-than-average dividends — are the biggest gainers so far this year. Utilities are up 5.7 percent in 2014 and health

the last two months as investors returned to the relative safety of government debt. The Barclays U.S. Aggregate bond index, which tracks a broad mix of corporate and government bonds, is up 1.6 percent this year.

"The sentiment now is, 'bonds may not be as bad as I originally thought,'" said Michael Fredericks, a portfolio manager of the Multi-Asset Income Fund at Blackrock.

February's rise came in spite of several economic reports that showed the U.S. economy slowed in the previous month.

It started with the January jobs report, which showed employers only created 113,000 jobs that month. It was far fewer than economists had expected. Other economic reports told a similar story. Consumer confidence, manufacturing and the housing market all fell sharply in January.

Investors blamed the weather, and rightly so. Many companies, particularly retailers, said winter storms of the past two months dramatically impacted their business. Macy's said that at one time in January, 30 percent of its stores were closed because of inclement weather.



First Minister of the Welsh Government Carwyn Jones, right, visits the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange with NYSE Vice President Scott Cutler before ringing the opening bell, Friday, Feb. 28, 2014.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

in February, the biggest gain since October 2013, helped by strong corporate earnings and a Federal Reserve that seems to have Wall Street's back at every turn. But the rise in February must be taken in the context that investors

Brothers Harriman Wealth Management.

Investors are also now starting at a stock market, while numbers-wise is basically where it was on Jan. 1, that is a lot more defensive than it was two months ago.

Utilities and health care

care is up 6.6 percent.

Investor caution was also evident in the bond market, which has done reasonably well in the last two months. The yield on the benchmark U.S. 10-year Treasury note has fallen from 2.97 percent to 2.65 percent in

Sears posts loss in tough season for many retailers

ELIZABETH A. HARRIS
© 2014 New York Times

Sears Holdings Corp. announced dismal fourth-quarter results this week, which included a holiday season that the company's chairman described as "tough to terrible" for Sears and many other retailers.

Best Buy also released results Thursday, swinging to a profit from its previous fourth quarter. Nonetheless, it was a difficult period for that retailer and many others, who made their way through exceptionally promotional, profit-squeezing holidays and were greeted on the other side by a polar vortex and plenty of storms.

At Sears, the net loss for the 2013 fiscal year, which ended Feb. 1, was \$1.4 billion. For the quarter, Sears lost \$358 million, an improvement compared with its \$489 million loss for the year-earlier quarter. Sales at U.S. stores open at least a year dropped 7.8 percent, while comparable sales at Kmart stores fell 5.1 percent.

Sears has been scrambling for years to reverse its slide, and it has staked its future on shifting from a traditional retailer to a company that focuses on members, through its Shop Your Way rewards program. For the year, 69 percent of Sears and Kmart sales came from Shop Your Way, up from 59 percent the previous year.

"Our full-year results are impacted during this transformation as we continue supporting traditional promotional programs and marketing expenditures while we invest in our Shop Your Way program and integrated retail strategy," said Edward S. Lampert, the chairman and chief executive. "We have been investing hundreds of millions of dollars annually in our transformation and will continue to invest in the future of the company." Best Buy, the electronics retailer, was beleaguered for the last few years as well, and while the holiday season proved difficult because of competition that resulted in steep discounts, many analysts were encouraged by its performance.

The company reported earnings of \$310 million for the fourth quarter, in contrast to a net loss of \$461 million during the fourth quarter a year earlier. The company's earnings were better than analysts had expected, and it exceeded its goal of eliminating \$725 million in costs, cutting \$765 million instead. Comparable online sales were up 25.8 percent for the quarter, and its business online reached 12.7 percent of total domestic sales, up from 10 percent last year.

"Eighteen months ago, everyone thought they'd be out of business because they couldn't compete with Amazon," said David Strasser, an analyst at Janney Montgomery Scott, who noted the company's online strategy, including the ability to ship products from stores. "They've gone from being the poster child for Internet disaster to a brick-and-click retailer. It's pretty remarkable."

But Best Buy still has work to do, Strasser cautioned.

Sales at its U.S. stores that were open for at least a year dropped 1.2 percent for the quarter; during the same period last year, sales at comparable stores were up 0.9 percent. Sales at international stores were down 1.7 percent this quarter.

"As we said in our holiday sales release, the fourth quarter was an environment of declining retail traffic, intense promotion, fewer holiday shopping days and severe weather," Hubert Joly, Best Buy's chief executive, said in a statement, in which he called the consumer electronics market "weaker than expected."

Retailers have issued a flurry of earnings reports in the last week. Lowe's and Home Depot did well. Macy's had a good holiday season, followed by a disappointing January. □

Contracts to buy US homes frozen

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans who signed contracts to buy homes was essentially flat in January, a possible sign

Snowstorms across much of the U.S. also delayed purchases. The Realtors project that sales will total 5 million this year, down from 5.1 million in 2013.

will be eased if more homes come onto the market in the months ahead. One way to increase the supply is through the construction of new homes, a sector not



A "For Sale" sign with a sale pending hangs in front of a house in Mount Lebanon, Pa. The National Association of Realtors reported on the number of Americans who signed contracts to buy homes in January on Friday, Feb. 28, 2014.

(AP Photo/Gene J. Puskar)

of a softening real estate market. The National Association of Realtors said Friday that its seasonally adjusted pending home sales index inched up 0.1 last month to 95. The index has fallen 9 percent over the past 12 months as sales momentum has faded.

Pending sales are a barometer of future purchases: A one- to two-month lag usually exists between a signed contract and a completed sale. Higher mortgage rates, rising prices and a tight supply of homes have restricted sales in recent months.

Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, thinks home buying could slow further through March.

"The bad news is that existing-home sales need to fall a bit further to move fully into line with the pending-sales index," he said in a client note. The rising costs of buying a home have contributed to a slowdown in signed contracts over the past seven months. Sales of existing homes plummeted in January to the weakest pace in 18 months, the trade group said last week. Some of the price pressures

measured by the Realtors' indicator on sales.

Purchases of new homes rose 9.6 percent in January to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 468,000, the Commerce Department said this week. That was the fastest pace since July 2008 and could lead to an uptick in construction.

More homeowners might also choose to put their properties on the market, a possibility suggested by a decline in underwater mortgages at the end of 2013, according to a report Friday by real estate data provider Zillow. □

Apple's Cook tries to tantalize shareholders

CUPERTINO, California (AP) — Apple CEO Tim Cook is still trying to convince shareholders that the iPhone maker remains a step ahead in the race to innovate, even though recent performance of the company's stock lags behind other technology trendsetters.

In making his case Friday, Cook touched upon familiar themes during Apple's annual shareholder meeting at the company's Cu-

pertino, California, headquarters.

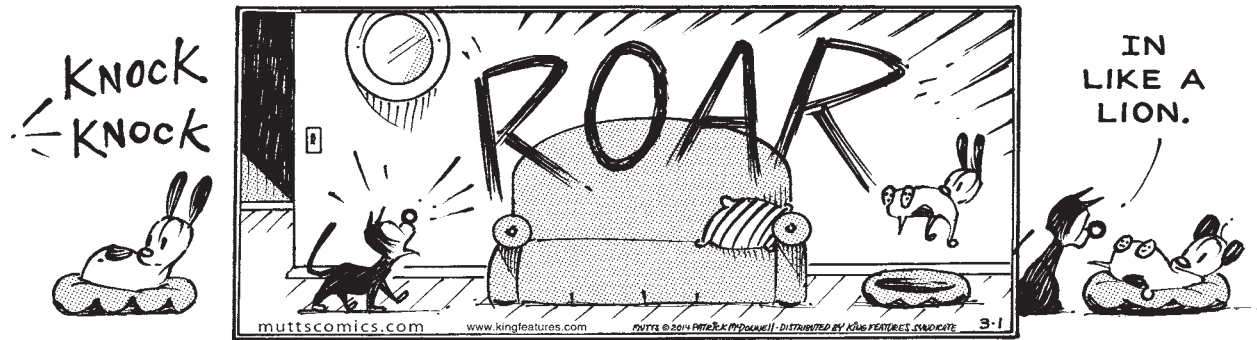
As he often does, Cook promised Apple Inc. is working on new gadgets that will expand the company's product line-up beyond smartphones, tablets, music players and personal computers.

Cook tantalized the crowd at one point when he told them he planned to provide a glimpse at the upcoming products, but it turned out to be just a

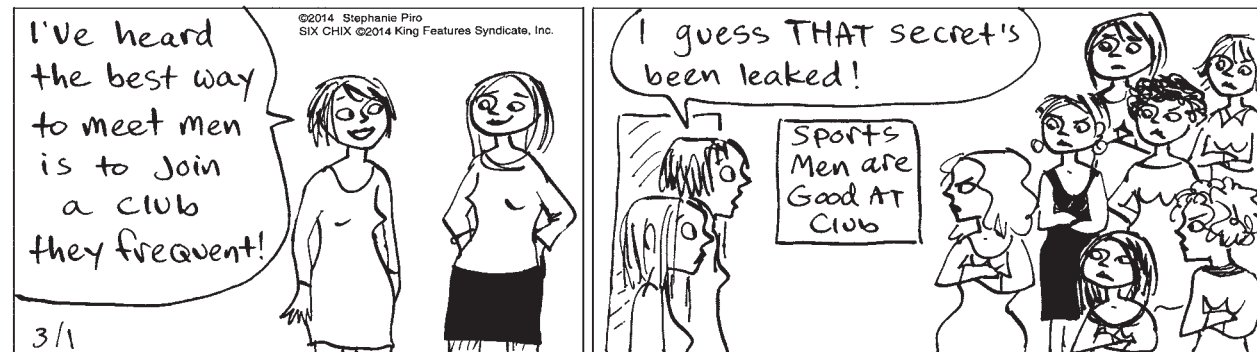
tease. He said he was only joking and didn't provide a timetable for the products' release. □

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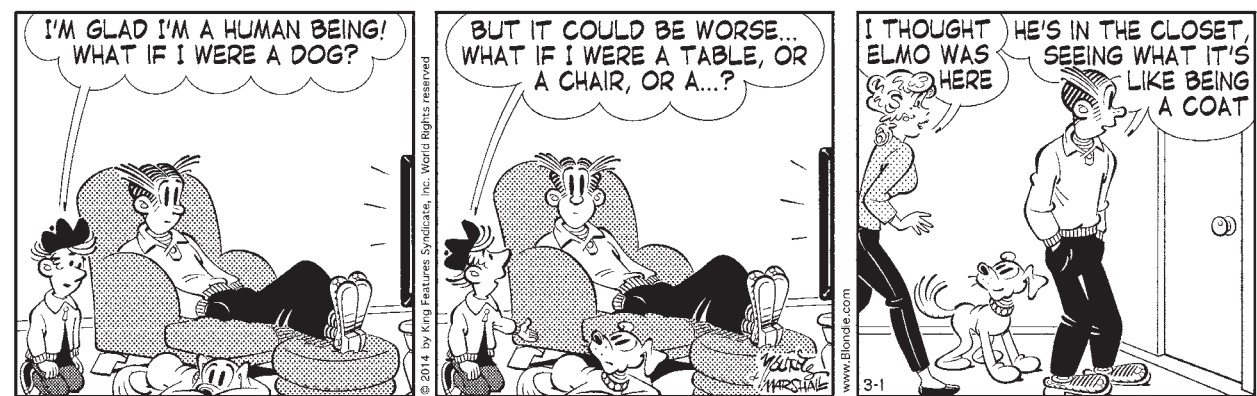
Mutts



6 Chix



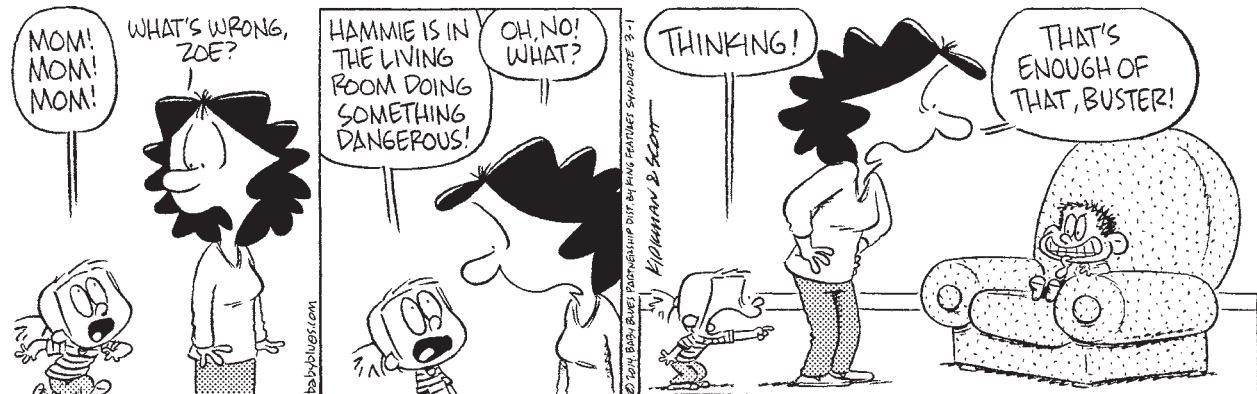
Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

		6						3
				5		4	9	
1				7				
	7	8	9				5	
	4				8	1	6	
			4					7
	2	5		9				
9						3		

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

3/01

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

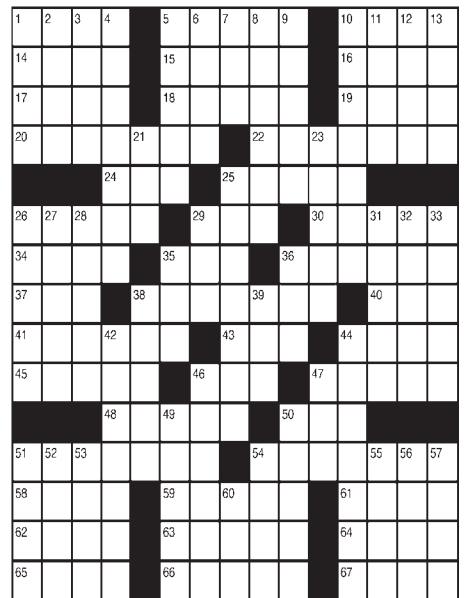
7	2	8	4	1	3	5	6	9
5	9	3	7	2	6	1	8	4
1	6	4	9	5	8	7	3	2
9	1	5	3	6	4	8	2	7
6	4	7	2	8	9	3	1	5
8	3	2	5	7	1	9	4	6
2	7	1	8	4	5	6	9	3
3	5	6	1	9	2	4	7	8
4	8	9	6	3	7	2	5	1

ACROSS

- Applaud
- Between-meal refreshment
- Mr. Strauss
- Head covering
- Dark chocolate-brown color
- Gung ho
- Pinnacle
- Lay to rest
- Small duck
- Regardless of
- With bells on
- "Roses __ red, violets..."
- Thespiian
- Frighten
- Speedometer letters
- Jewish leader
- Relinquish
- Fool
- Balloon gas
- Hubbub
- Musical rattles made from gourds
- Short swim
- Not wide
- Traitor
- __ about; describe
- __ on; trample
- Flower garden
- __ about; discuss lightly
- Wild
- Give a nickname to
- Trinkets
- Large island of Indonesia
- Small brook
- Sir __ Newton
- Single swallow of liquor
- __ of Capri
- Horse's remark
- Refer to
- __ up; blow it
- Go off the path
- Dollar bills

DOWN

- Actor Everett
- "Arsenic and Old __"
- __ high; has lofty aspirations
- Get ready
- Hit hard
- Zero
- Play a role
- Actor Marin
- __ gold
- Sideways football pass
- At any time
- Small bottle
- In a lazy way
- Anger
- Punctures
- Clothing
- Meager
- Fragrant wood
- Worship
- Deface
- VP Joe __
- Construct
- Suggest indirectly
- Noticed
- Dr. Seuss' "The Cat in the __"
- Fashion show participant
- Uncaring fellow
- Drawings
- Hot sauce
- __ hound; dog with short legs
- Ne'er-do-well
- Harness straps
- Luxembourg, but no other nation today
- Brief haircut
- Ascend
- Misfortunes
- Long story
- Bed size
- Ceremony
- Eras
- Broadcast



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

3/1/14

Friday's Puzzle Solved

KATES	SLAM	OGRE
ITALY	NAPE	FLAN
MOLES	AWED	FONT
SPECTERS	ICEAGE	
TELL	SAUNDER	
PLASMA	OWNED	
LAB	STOLE	SEEDS
OVER	EIDER	DRAT
WADER	LETUP	GNU
COWER	BEMOAN	
OCTOBER	PERE	
DRIVER	MISMATCH	
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3/1/14

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202299

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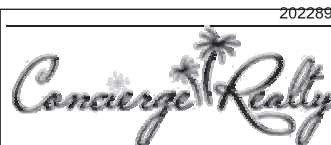
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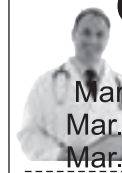
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S. NICOLAS: Centro Medico Tel: 584-5794

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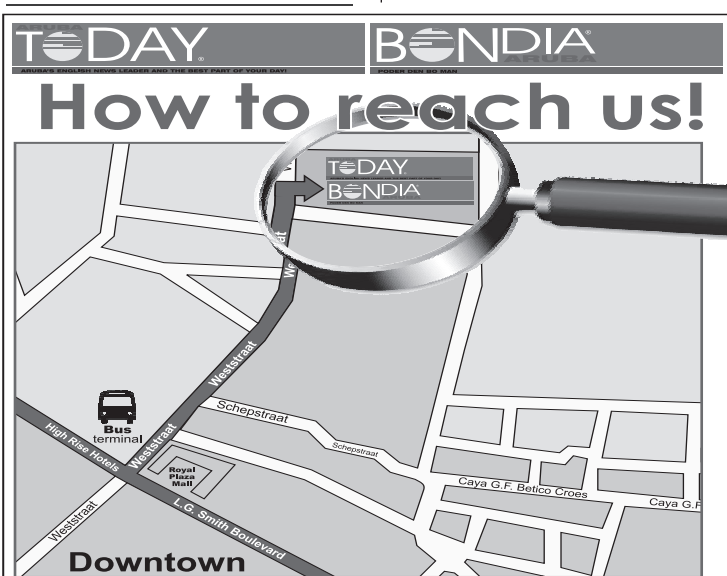
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Researchers: Yellowstone grizzlies not in decline

MATTHEW BROWN

Associated Press

BILLINGS, Montana (AP) —

A government-sponsored research team has concluded there are no signs of decline among Yellowstone's grizzly bears as officials consider lifting the animals' federal protections — despite warnings from outside scientists that such a move would be premature. Members of the Inter-agency Grizzly Bear Study team say in a new study that data collected on the threatened bruins over the past several decades contradict claims that the animals could be in serious trouble.

Researchers on the team re-examined how bears are counted after wildlife advocates and a prominent University of Colorado professor questioned the government's methods. The results confirm the validity of past assertions that more than 700 bears live in the Yellowstone region of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming, lead author Frank van Manen said. The peer-reviewed study is slated to appear in an upcoming issue of the scientific journal Conservation Letters.

"The (grizzly bear) popu-



This undated image provided by the U.S. Geological Survey shows researchers measuring a grizzly bear in the Taylor Fork area of the Gallatin National Forest north of Yellowstone National Park in southwest Montana.

lation growth has slowed down in the last decade, but is by all means a robust population right now," van Manen said. "Critiques in scientific efforts can be constructive. Because of this critique, we looked very hard at our own data ... It basically confirms what we had seen before."

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officials are expected to soon announce whether grizzly bears should lose

their threatened species. That would kick off a year-long rulemaking process prior to a final decision in 2015.

Rising numbers of bear-human conflicts — including periodic maulings of hunters, hikers and others — have lent new urgency to calls to lift their legal protections and allow limited hunting of grizzlies to resume. Hunters and trappers exterminated the animals

across most of the Lower 48 states during the last century.

Yellowstone's bears lost federal protections once, in 2007, until a federal judge ordered them back onto the threatened species list two years later. Judge Donald Molloy cited concerns that a key food for some bears, the nuts from white bark pine trees, has grown increasingly scarce as insects kill large stands of

the trees.

University of Colorado biologist Dan Doak said in a study last year that the loss of whitebark pine and a decline in another food source, cutthroat trout, may have pushed bears into areas where they are more likely to be seen during aerial surveys.

He said that doesn't necessarily mean there are more bears, only that more are being seen.

Doak and co-author Kerry Cutler also said wildlife officials mistakenly assumed female grizzly bears reproduce throughout a 30-year lifespan, compounding the government's overly-optimistic population estimates. Doak said Thursday that he stood by his prior conclusions and hoped they would be further considered by the government study team as it sets up a monitoring program to keep track of bears after federal protections are lifted. Van Manen said the study team's aerial surveys are corroborated by other factors. That includes a doubling of the area occupied by grizzlies since the 1970s and a trapping program that consistently identifies new bears. □

Associated Press



In this Aug. 24, 2010 FILE photo released by Chile's Paleontological Museum of Caldera, a prehistoric whale fossil lays in the Atacama desert near Copiapo, Chile.

LUIS ANDRES HENAO

Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) —

Scientists investigating a graveyard of marine mammal fossils near Chile's northern coast say

toxins generated by algae blooms most likely poisoned the animals millions of years ago.

The study by a team of Chilean and Smithsonian Institution scientists was

Associated Press

Chile: Fossil whales in desert mystery solved

published Wednesday in the British journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B. The experts traveled to Chile's Atacama region in 2011 to unearth one of the world's best-preserved graveyards of prehistoric whales. Their findings help solve a mystery about how dozens of whales and other marine mammals congregating off South America's Pacific Coast died only to emerge again atop a desert hill over a half mile from the surf.

"There are hundreds of whale skeletons yet to be found," said Nick Pyenson, curator of fossil marine mammals at the Smithson-

ian's National Museum of Natural History. "This is a site on par with Dinosaur National Monument here in the United States, a whole hillside littered with dinosaur skeletons. We seem to have the same thing except with whales here in Chile."

The remains were first found by construction workers in 2010 during the widening of the Pan American Highway, or Route 5, which is Chile's main north-south road. Other unusual creatures found at the "Cerro Ballena," or Whale Hill, site include an extinct aquatic sloth and a walrus-like toothed whale.

Scientists say the skeletons show the animals were poisoned by toxins some 5 million to 11 million years ago and "died at sea, prior to burial on a tidal flat."

"Based on the orientation of the skeletons and other information, these whales likely died from harmful algae blooms, which we know in the modern world can be a killer," Pyenson said. Algae blooms can create poisons that can be ingested or inhaled causing organ failure in marine mammals. Blooms are common along coasts and are enriched by nutrients like iron carried by rivers into the ocean. □

Oscar host Ellen DeGeneres is ready to dance

MIKE CIDONI LENNOX

AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Seven years after her Oscar debut, Ellen DeGeneres is back.

The 56-year-old TV personality talked with The Associated Press about her plans and preparations for hosting her second Academy Awards this Sunday.

AP: What did it take for you to say yes again?

DeGeneres: "It took my agent saying, 'Yes, you should do it.' And I said, 'OK.' Look, it's the greatest gig in the world. And it's also really, really hard. So, I wasn't going to do it, because I've done it before. And I thought, 'I don't need to do that again.' And then I realized I'm too comfortable and too complacent and I should scare myself and take a chance. So here I am, scaring myself and taking a chance."

AP: Describe the fear ele-

ment of the job.

DeGeneres: "It's live around the world, to a billion people watching, and every major person who is in the room that has done every major thing. I mean, I know a lot of them. So, it helps a little bit that I'm friendly with everybody. But it's still scary. It's the energy in the room. There's a lot of really anxious energy and, so, you kind of pick that up. You can feel all that when you walk out. So I'm trying to remain calm."

AP: How will you be able to resist dancing along with the nominated songs, especially Pharrell Williams' "Happy"?

DeGeneres: "I know. I will be dancing like crazy, whether he likes it or not. I'm just looking forward to the hat he wears. And I hope that the person (sitting) behind him isn't mad, because he wears a large hat, that Pharrell."



In this April 29, 2013 file photo, TV host Ellen DeGeneres arrives at the season 4 premiere of "Arrested Development" in Los Angeles.

Associated Press

AP: What's your ultimate goal for Oscar night?

DeGeneres: "I hope that everyone had fun. I hope that it didn't seem like it's

as long as it's going to be. This year it's six hours. Did you know that? Six hours...

Here's what I hope: I hope when I say, 'Goodnight,'

I hope people go: 'One more hour! One more hour!' And they start chanting and make me stay. That's what I hope." □

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Cuaron's Oscar nod leaves Mexico soul searching

ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON

Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The Oscars could be Mexico's big night, with three Mexicans nominated for directing, cinematography and acting.

Except that some in Mexico aren't looking at it that way.

Despite feeble cries of "Viva Mexico!" by some politicians and celebrities for the best-director nomination of Alfonso Cuaron, many here see "Gravity" as a non-Mexican movie made by a man swallowed by Hollywood long ago — not as a product of Mexico's own proud but struggling film industry.

"To say that 'Gravity' is a Mexican achievement is like saying that 'Rosemary's Baby' was a Polish one," said Mexican filmmaker Arturo Ripstein, referring to director Roman Polanski's masterpiece.

In a speech at an award



Mexican film director Alfonso Cuaron poses for a photos during a press conference promoting his latest film "Gravedad" in Mexico City, Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2013.

ceremony earlier this week, Ripstein instead urged moviegoers to defend Mexican films that portray the country's culture and realities, rather

than feeling proud of those who succeed by leaving the country and working in another language.

The same can be said for the two other nominees Sunday. Cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki has been nominated for six Academy Awards, including now for "Gravity," but always for non-Mexican-themed movies. And Lupita Nyong'o, Hollywood's new sensation for her work in "12 Years a Slave," happened to be born in Mexico City but lived there less than a year and grew up in her native Kenya.

But the Mexican soul-searching centers mainly on Cuaron, who made the lost-in-space odyssey that has been applauded as a sci-fi breakthrough because of its extraordinary special effects. Before that, he had directed many international films, including "The Little Princess," "Children of Men" and "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban."

"Gravity" itself is an example of how global the film industry has become. Much of the "Hollywood" film was made in London, and it won Cuaron this year's award for best director of a British film.

The last Spanish-language

film he directed was "Y Tu Mama, Tambien," in 2001, which launched the Hollywood careers of Diego Luna and Gael Garcia Bernal.

In fact, several Mexican newspapers have reported that Cuaron alienated a professor at the prestigious National Autonomous University of Mexico for making an English-language film in college, and left shortly after without finishing.

"We have to be very proud that this is a man who came out of the Mexican education system with Mexican film professors. He is the son of Mexican cinema. But he has become universal," said Leon Krauze, a cultural commentator and news anchor for the Univision network. If he wins, Cuaron would not only be the first Mexican, but also the first Latin American director to win an Oscar for best director. Since his nomination, a photo of his college ID as proof of his roots has circulated in the Mexican media, though a newspaper profile later revealed his early departure from university. School representatives said they could not disclose details of why his studies ended in the 1980s. After some work in TV and the Mexican 1991 comedy, "Love in the Time of Hysteria," Cuaron moved to Hollywood, where his general film debut was "A Little Princess" in 1995, for which Lubezki was nominated in cinematography. Some praise him for handling themes far from crooked cops, drug lords and migrants.

"He deserves the prize. He has made a very interesting career in Hollywood," said Ernesto Diezmartinez, a movie critic for national newspaper Reforma.

Even Cuaron himself wrote in Reforma that Mexicans should praise countrymen who deal with domestic themes, such as Amat Escalante, whose film "Heli" was submitted — but not nominated — for Best Foreign Film. It is a portrait of a family shaken by drug violence.

Liam Neeson chides NYC mayor on horse carriages



This Sept. 10, 2013 file photo shows actor Liam Neeson smiling during a press conference for "Third Person" at the 2013 Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Actor Liam Neeson says he's upset at New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio for wanting to shut down the city's horse-drawn carriage industry.

Neeson complained during an appearance on "The Daily Show" this week that critics have put out false information about how the horses are treated. He says drivers treat the horses like their own children.

De Blasio has declared his intention to shut down the industry, saying it's inhumane to keep horses in Manhattan. The Democrat wants to replace them with electric cars.

Neeson says most New Yorkers want to keep the horses and de Blasio "is supposed to be representing the New York people." Carriage drivers say shutting the stables would eliminate a rare outlet for surplus horses, meaning they'll be sent to the slaughterhouse faster.

Parade Marches Backward



MAUREEN DOWD
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I have long been opposed to gays marching in the St. Patrick's Day Parade on Fifth Avenue. It isn't because my father was a past national president of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, which ran the parade for a century and started the rule that no gays need apply. Faith and begorrah, heaven knows I have nothing against gays. I have something against Irish parades.

It has just always seemed strange to me that gays were fighting so hard for so long to bust into such a hoary, boozy, corny tradition. Didn't they have something more fun and cool to do?

I was traumatized by an Irish parade as a child when I was awakened one morning on a family trip to a Hibernian convention in St. Louis by a band loudly playing "When the Saints Go Marching In." My sister, brother and I raced to the window and saw our parents leading a march of Hibernians from Mass to breakfast at our hotel. It was mortifying. I still can't hear that song without wincing. But certainly, if gays want in, they should get in. And that's why Mayor Bill de Blasio is right to blow off the parade in protest of the Putinesque restrictions.

De Blasio, who has said his mother was raised a Catholic but did not bring him up in the church, is being joined in the boycott by his mini-me, City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. The Irish prime minister, Enda Kenny, is coming, but one of his Cabinet members has refused to march. Some New York liberals and elected officials pressed the mayor to bar uniformed police and firefighters from marching, but de Blasio, perhaps fearing a shellacking with a shillelagh, demurred. The mayor of Boston, Martin Walsh, also vowed not to march in his city's St. Patrick's Day Parade if banner-waving gays are banned, although he's being more conciliatory than de Blasio, working to broker a deal. Despite taunts by the Catholic League's wacky Bill Donohue and Fox News' tacky Sean Hannity - who berated "Comrade de Blasio" for "being prejudiced toward people's deeply held fundamental religious belief" - the mayor seems determined to get parade organizers to fold. At this point the parade is as insanely antediluvian as Arizona lawmakers who passed a bill allowing businesses to discriminate against gay customers on "religious" grounds. Bonkers.

The largest parade in the Western world, as Niall O'Dowd, the founder of irishcentral.com and The Irish Voice, calls it, is no longer run by the AOH but by the St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee, seven volunteers in the Bronx directed by John Dunleavy, a retired bus driver and superintendent. But O'Dowd says that Dunleavy, who seems like he stepped out of a different era, is "king of a Potemkin village." Even though the parade was started in the 18th century by Protestant Irish troops in the British army, now the power behind the parade is Cardinal Timothy Dolan.

"Cardinal Dolan is essentially the arbiter," O'Dowd says. "Every grand marshal is checked with him. The parade chairman always seeks the approval of the cardinal for who marches in the parade." O'Dowd concedes that the organizers are "equal opportunity offenders. They also used to refuse to allow kids in wheelchairs into the parade. The big issue they face today is: Are they Irish or are they Catholic? If it was just an Irish parade, these people would have the power to let gays march. But the real power is with the Catholic Church." Pope Francis has shown a more conciliatory attitude toward gays than some conservative American clerics like Dolan, asking, "Who am I to judge?"

Christine Quinn, a lesbian who organized protests on the policy and who says it was wrong for former Mayor Michael Bloomberg to march in the parade, explained to me why she thinks "it's tragic."

"My father is 87, and we always hoped we'd get to march in it together one day," the former council speaker said. "He marched when he was in high school and took me to it as a child. The organizers don't understand there are real human consequences and pain in this discriminating."

The Irish Voice reports that a special guest at St. Patrick's Day "parade for all" in Queens - which, unlike Manhattan, allows gay marchers to carry banners and signs - will be renowned Dublin drag queen Panti Bliss, whose real name is Rory O'Neill. He told me that in the "glittery, nutty" Dublin parade, "there's no problem being absolutely as gay as anyone wants."

He said he was in the Irish parade one year "chained to the top of a papier-mâché, fiery mountain singing 'Holding Out For a Hero' by Bonnie Tyler with 50 children dressed up as Celtic warriors in little boats saving the trapped drag queen attacked by a giant one-eyed monster."

The Manhattan parade organizers, he said, are, ironically, like pious Orangemen, "very much tied up in an old Ireland that doesn't really exist anymore." He finds the prudery odd. "If they're not kind of gay, they're not really a parade," he said. "A heterosexual parade seems to me an organized walk in the traffic lane." □



The Olympics has ended and Putin can turn to other problems.

Don't Just Do Something. Sit There



THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
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With Russia growling over the downfall of its ally running Ukraine and still protecting its murderous ally running Syria, there is much talk that we're returning to the Cold War - and that the Obama team is not up to defending our interests or friends. I beg to differ. I don't think the Cold War is back; today's geopolitics are actually so much more interesting than that. And I also don't think President Barack Obama's caution is entirely misplaced.

The Cold War was a unique event that pitted two global ideologies, two global superpowers, each with globe-spanning nuclear arsenals and broad alliances behind them. Indeed, the world was divided into a chessboard of red and black, and who controlled each square mattered to each side's sense of security, well-being and power. It was also a zero-sum game, in which every gain for the Soviet Union and its allies was a loss for the West and NATO, and vice versa.

That game is over. We won. What we have today is the combination of an older game and a newer game. The biggest geopolitical divide in the world today "is between those countries who want their states to be powerful and those countries who want their people to be prosperous," argues Michael Mandelbaum, professor of foreign policy at Johns Hopkins.

The first category would be countries like Russia, Iran and North Korea, whose leaders are focused on building their authority, dignity and influence through powerful states. And because

the first two have oil and the last has nukes that it can trade for food, their leaders can defy the global system and survive, if not thrive - all while playing an old, traditional game of power politics to dominate their respective regions.

The second category, countries focused on building their dignity and influence through prosperous people, includes all the countries in NAFTA, the European Union, and the MERCOSUR trade bloc in Latin America and ASEAN in Asia. These countries understand that the biggest trend in the world today is not a new Cold War but the merger of globalization and the information technology revolution. They are focused on putting in place the right schools, infrastructure, bandwidth, trade regimes, investment openings and economic management so more of their people can thrive in a world in which every middle-class job will require more skill and the ability to constantly innovate will determine their standard of living. (The true source of sustainable power.)

But there is also now a third and growing category of countries, which can't project power or build prosperity. They constitute the world of "disorder." They are actually power and prosperity sinks because they are consumed in internal fights over primal questions like: Who are we? What are our boundaries? Who owns which olive tree? These countries include Syria, Libya, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Congo and other hot spots. While those nations focused on state power do play in some of these countries - Russia and Iran both play in Syria - the states that are more focused on building prosperity are trying to avoid getting too involved in the world of disorder. Though ready to help mitigate humanitarian tragedies there, they know that when you "win" one of these countries in today's geopolitical game, all you win is a bill.

Ukraine actually straddles all three of these trends. The revo-

lution there happened because the government was induced by Russia, which wants to keep Ukraine in its sphere of influence, into pulling out of a trade agreement with the European Union - an agreement favored by the many Ukrainians focused on building a prosperous people. This split has also triggered talk of separatism by the more Russian-speaking and Russian-oriented eastern part of Ukraine.

So what do we do? The world is learning that the bar for U.S. intervention abroad is being set much higher. This is due to a confluence of the end of the Soviet Union's existential threat, the experience of investing too many lives and \$2 trillion in Iraq and Afghanistan to little lasting impact, America's rising energy independence, our intelligence successes in preventing another 9/11 and the realization that to fix what ails the most troubled countries in the world of disorder is often beyond our skill set, resources or patience.

In the Cold War, policymaking was straightforward. We had "containment." It told us what to do and at almost any price. Today, Obama's critics say he must do "something" about Syria. I get it. Chaos there can come around to bite us. If there is a policy that would fix Syria, or even just stop the killing there, in a way that was self-sustaining, at a cost we could tolerate and not detract from all the things we need to do at home to secure our own future, I'm for it.

But we should have learned some lessons from our recent experience in the Middle East: First, how little we understand about the social and political complexities of the countries there; second, that we can - at considerable cost - stop bad things from happening in these countries but cannot, by ourselves, make good things happen; and third, that when we try to make good things happen we run the risk of assuming the responsibility for solving their problems, a responsibility that truly belongs to them. □

Rio's Carnival Pits Pickpockets Versus Partygoers

JENNY BARCHFIELD

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) —

Rio de Janeiro's over-the-top Carnival that opened Friday is the highlight of the year for many local residents — including the city's talented pickpockets, for whom the five days of beer-fueled street parties is an annual boon.

With the first of Rio's nearly 500 "bloco" street parties in full swing, revelers are drawing on a wealth of tricks and hard-earned knowledge from past years to keep the crime at bay. Some use money belts or secret pockets inside ornate costumes. Others stash cash inside tennis shoes and carry ancient cellphones.

Clever revelers are going to extremes to confound the nimble-fingered thieves working the crowds.

A picked pocket can spell the end of the fun and an hours-long wait at one of Rio's sluggish police stations to make a report, with nearly no hope of ever getting the stolen goods back. Last year, local television stations ran images of lines of robbed revelers snaking out of police stations, waiting to file complaints after being fleeced at one of the street parties, some of which can attract upward of 1 million people.

Rio state's ISP statistics agency doesn't break out crimes specifically committed during Carnival days in its monthly reports, but reports of pickpocketing routinely increase by around 30 percent during whichever month Carnival falls. At a street party called "Popcorn and Soda" in Rio's middle class Tijuca neighborhood on Friday, Rafael Henrique Victorio was sporting what he thought of as a pickpocket-proof costume, a maroon mumu worthy of the likes of Zsa Zsa Gabor.

"If someone wants to get their hands in my pockets they're going to have to get around all this material first," said Victorio, a lawyer whose crowning glory was his XXL black curly wig



Revelers in costume partake in the Boitata block party, a pre-Carnival celebration in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. People gathered for one of the many parades before the official start of Carnival on Feb. 28.

(AP Photo/Leo Correa)

dolled up with plastic flowers.

Friends Isis Jatoba and Luiza Borges were both debuting new money belts bought specially for Carnival to protect their beer and water money, bus passes, keys and the old cellphones they only drag out for the

mass parties so their new ones don't get nicked.

"It keeps my hands free and the few things that I really need safe," said 24-year-old Borges, lifting her polka dotted Minnie Mouse T-shirt to reveal a soggy-looking beige money belt. "The only problem

is that it's so hot out, the belt and everything in it gets super sweaty. I have to wrap my cellphone in a plastic bag to keep it working."

Jatoba, a 28-year-old schoolteacher kitted out as Wonder Woman, said she's on high alert despite never

having been robbed during Carnival.

"But I had a friend come here from out of town and she was robbed twice during the same Carnival," said Jatoba, in itsy-bitsy star-spangled poofy skirt and superhero headband. "Nobody deserves that." □



Queen and princess of the "Rua do Mercado" band carnival parade in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Thursday, Feb. 27, 2014. People gathered Thursday for one of many parades before the official start of Carnival on Feb. 28.

(AP Photo/Silvia Izquierdo)